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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are employed in the public sector has increased by 1.5 million, from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4 million in 1995. The public sector has also become an important employer of women, with 60% of public sector employees being women in 1995.

There are a number of reasons why the public sector has become an important employer of women. One reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of women in the workforce. Another reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of women in the senior management positions. A third reason is that the public sector has a high proportion of women in the lower paid jobs.

The public sector has also become an important employer of women because it provides a range of services that are essential to the well-being of the community. These services include education, health care, social care, and housing. The public sector also provides a range of other services, such as the police, fire service, and the armed forces.

The public sector has also become an important employer of women because it provides a range of opportunities for women to develop their skills and experience. The public sector also provides a range of opportunities for women to advance their careers. The public sector also provides a range of opportunities for women to work in a variety of different settings.

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**“IT IS YOUR LIFE ”**



# "IT IS YOUR LIFE"

*PREACHING FOR THE PEOPLE*

BY

REV. JAMES BARBOUR JOHNSTONE  
WARRINGTON



STRAHAN & CO.  
56 LUDGATE HILL, LONDON  
1872

100. w. 179.

LONDON:  
PRINTED BY VIRTUE AND CO.,  
CITY ROAD.



## PREFATORY NOTE.

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THE following sermons were prepared for a series of Special Services for the Working Classes. They certainly arrested their attention, and I had reason to believe with heavenly blessing. I give them to the press, in the hope that they may be words in season to some poor wanderers, who are far out of the way of life.

May the LORD, to whom the gathering of the people shall be, make them full of power.

J. B. J.

ST. JOHN'S, WARRINGTON,  
*July, 1872.*



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I.

SHOULD IT NOT BE *MUST* FOR GOD AND OUR  
SOULS?

B



LUKE ii. 49.

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

JOHN iii. 7.

"Ye must be born again."

ACTS xvi. 30.

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

OUR musts either make us or mar us. People say they must do this thing or that. They lay it down as beyond dispute, a stern necessity. Their musts rule them. They are a kind of fate, which comes and goads them on. They hold that they cannot avoid these things; they must be done. This is their excuse, they must do it. They have no choice in the matter—this necessity is their law. The tyranny of these musts is intolerable. They strike at all that is noble in regard to man; they run counter to his duty and highest interests. They thoroughly enervate him, and drag him down into that which is hurtful and ignoble—a life fruitless of true good.

They say they must do these things, that there is no alternative. There lies the fallacy. There is an alternative. The fact is that these musts are like certain enemies, who come with a great deal of bluster, and demand instant surrender and obedience, as if they were our rightful lords; whereas let their claims be inquired into, and they will be found groundless, and their power to hurt contemptible. Let them be manfully confronted and their demands examined, and they will be seen to be naught, and their forces speedily put to flight.

There are other musts of a vastly higher order which stand directly opposed to these. They are in conflict. You cannot do both, and must make your choice. There the danger lies. If we choose the lesser must instead of the greater, we shall suffer. It is upon that rock that thousands perish. They run on heedlessly, saying, "We must do these things, we cannot help ourselves." Not so; there is another must overlooked, disregarded, and jostled aside, which is infinitely more important. A case in point occurs to me. A vessel in the darkness of a winter's night ran upon the rocks in the north of Scotland. Two coast-guardsmen heard the cry of distress, and



ran to an inn, where the fishermen of the village were congregated at a merry-making. They rushed in among the dancers, and shouted, "A vessel is upon the rocks!" But, to their shame, not a man would come. I suppose that they thought they must have their fun and drunken spree out, and could not go. True, they would have to give up these for the time; another must call them away; they must strive to save the poor drowning men who were clinging to the wreck. But they would not; and the two men had to go alone, and striking out with a small skiff among the breakers, they nobly saved all at the risk of their own lives.

A young man going along the street meets his shopmates, who are bound to a public-house, and they say he must go with them. He had no intention of doing so, but he cannot refuse them; they are his friends, and perhaps have been helpful to him in the shop in which he works. He thinks he must go; it would be rude and unkind to refuse. He goes, and he must drink also to please them. He must not be shabby, but "stand his shot" also. And, as the result, he goes reeling home, and wakes next morning with an aching head and an empty pocket.

We know the tyranny of custom. We must not be singular; and thus expenses are incurred which leave a weary burden of debt for many years to come. The head of a house dies, leaving a widow and many small children with but a few shillings for their portion; and yet the widow thinks she must lay the small sum out in drink to entertain her so-called friends, lest they should say she was stingy.

Now, you see in all these cases far higher musts are ignored—musts calling imperatively upon us to do good and to avoid evil, in opposition to all opposing claims. Yes, the lesser must should give way to the greater—that which is spurious or trifling to that which is true and momentous. It called for a sacrifice of time, and labour, and means, yet the good Samaritan felt that he must at all costs stay and help his poor wounded neighbour. What bears stronger sway over a man than love of ease and pleasure? Yet does not a student, fired by a noble ambition to advance in learning and fit himself for a useful calling, feel that he “must shun delights and live laborious days?” How the patriot soldier at the call of his country will forego the pleasures of home and family, and brave the dangers of the

battle-field ! Duty calls him on, and he must obey, even unto the endurance of all hardships, and the sacrifice of life itself. What are we more ready to insist upon than that a young man should be careful of his expenditure, and, if possible, provide a sum for future days, when many claims may press upon him ? But yonder, away in the country, lives his old widowed mother. Her means are gone, and she is quite unable to support herself. Now one must come and says, "You must lay up money in your youth for after days of need." Ah ! but this other must come, God giving it voice, and says, "No, your imperative duty now is to exercise a noble self-denial, and shield your mother from want and from all the indignities of a pauper position, and thus to fill her heart with gladness and brighten her home upon which such dark shadows have fallen." Who would not cry shame upon that son who, unmindful of all a mother's claims, should studiously disregard her, and seek his own selfish ends ?

Well, now it must be clear that we are called to make a choice between these musts. They often lie directly antagonistic. You cannot do both ; one must give place. The rule that ought to hold good,

of course, here is, that the lesser ought to give place to the greater, and that which is merely temporal in character to that which is eternal. They ought to be watched carefully and well sifted. Well, when we do so, we find that there are two which tower high above all others, which nevertheless the mass of men are strangely disregarding. First, there is a must for God ; second, there is one for our souls. While a thousand musts are putting in their claims, these do so too, and demand our highest regard. Let us see how great their claims are.

I.—THERE IS A MUST FOR GOD.

You remember that old and ever-blessed story of the child Jesus in the Temple. Mary and Joseph set out for home, thinking that Jesus was among their kinsfolk. After a while they wonder that they have not seen Him, and begin to seek Him, but He is nowhere to be found. They get distressed, and go back to Jerusalem, but for three days they search for Him in vain. At last they go to the temple. Strange that they did not think of going there at first. His mother rebukes Him. Ah ! mark his answer : "How is it that ye sought me ; wist ye not

that I must be about my Father's business?" This brings out this great must for God. Jesus is but twelve years old, but He must be about his Father's business. He was in this showing us that God's claims are so great that we should set early about them. We all, as God's children, have a business to do for Him. We should be about it early, diligently, perseveringly. Robert McCheyne used to seal his letters with an impression of the sun setting, and the words, "The night cometh." Thus he kept himself in mind, and reminded others also, of the work God called for—a work which had to be done while it was day.

Now, here is a great must—we must do God's work, honour and serve Him, and seek to advance his cause and glory. This must be done, whatever is left undone. Whatever conflicts with it and leads us to forget God, or to disobey and dishonour Him, must be eschewed, not listened to for a moment. You remember the noble answer Peter gave when he was commanded under pains and penalties not to speak in the name of Jesus: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." You remember also the

answer which John Bunyan's wife gave to the judge who promised to let her husband out of prison on condition that he would cease preaching: "Why, my lord, if he were out of prison to-day, he would preach the gospel to-morrow." John Welch's wife, a daughter of John Knox, when King James offered to allow her husband to return to Scotland if she would persuade him to submit to the bishops, said, lifting up her apron, "Please, your Majesty, I'd rather kep his head there."

It was thus the martyrs' troubles fell upon them. They must be faithful to God. Carnal, worldly men could not understand why they would not sign or say what they demanded. They said, "You must conform, as others have done. You must obey the king; you must do it for the sake of your own life and the interests of those dear to you." Ah, no, they cannot, they must not. God's claims bar the way, and say, "Ye must not do this thing; ye must be faithful unto death."

It is here where the men of the world err most. They call it fanaticism, stubbornness, bigotry, and madness. As if to honour God, to obey his will, and to be faithful to his truth were to be a fanatical

fool, and such a stubborn disturber of the peace that the best they can do with him is to burn him. We see the same leaven at work still. The great mass do not consider that God has any claims. His will and mind is the very last thing they think of. They ignore it wholly. A hundred other musts should be considered, but God's musts never. People say, "We must keep our shops and our public-houses open on Sabbath because others do it, or we shall suffer loss." Yes, quite true, they must or loss will follow. But is that all that has to be considered? Is there no voice from heaven crying, trumpet-tongued, "Ye shall not do this thing. Ye must keep holy my Sabbaths. How shall ye do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Alas! what reason have we all to be humbled when we consider how high and holy God's claims are, and think how little we do for Him; how great our sin is, and that we are at best unprofitable servants.

"Have mercy on us, Jesus Christ our Lord!  
The cross Thou borest still is hard to bear;  
And awful, even to humblest follower,  
The little that Thou givest each to do

Of this Thy Father's business ; whether it be  
 Temptation by the devil of the flesh,  
 Or long-linked years of lingering toil obscure,  
 Uncomforted, save by the solemn rests  
 On mountain-tops of solitary prayer ;  
 Oft ending in the supreme sacrifice,  
 The putting off all garments of delight,  
 And taking sorrow's kingly crown of thorn  
 In crucifixion of all self to Thee,  
 Who offeredst up Thyself for all the world.  
 O Christ, hear us !

"O Thou who wert the child of Nazareth,  
 Make us see only this, and only Thee,  
 Who camest but to do Thy Father's will,  
 And didst delight to do it. Take Thou then  
 Our bitterness of loss, aspirings vain,  
 And anguishes of unfulfilled desire,  
 Our joys imperfect, our sublimed despairs,  
 Our hopes, our dreams, our wills, our loves, our all,  
 And cast them into the great crucible  
 In which the whole earth, slowly purified,  
 Runs molten, and shall run,—the Will of God.  
 O Christ, hear us ! " \*

## II.—THERE IS A MUST FOR OUR SOULS.

Away up yonder hill-side is a shepherd's cottage.  
 It is night, and the shepherd is in bed with his  
 family, but he cannot rest. Ere he lay down he saw

\* Miss Mulloch.



that the weather was threatening. Now he starts up, as he hears the angry gusts shake the window-panes, and the beating snow drifting wildly. Ah, it is just a night to thank God for comfortable shelter, and to hup himself anew and go to sleep again. But instead of this the shepherd hurries on his clothes, and with his plaid closely wrapped round him, he starts out to face the keen snow-blast away upon the hill. What takes the man out in such a night? The case must be urgent indeed. Well, it is the sheep entrusted to his care which call for that self-denial. Their lives are in danger, and he must face the blast and get them into a place of safety. There he watches over them all the night with his faithful dog, at the peril of his own life. And yet it is but a flock of sheep, after all.

Down in the road below you hear the clatter of a horse's feet as the rider hurries it along. He also has been called up in the dreary night to ride post-haste some nine or ten miles to a distant town. What demand have we here? What calls that he must ride so far in such a night? Well, a fellow-creature has been taken suddenly ill, and the doctor's skill is urgently called for, and he must go

and fetch him. And yet it is but for the health of the body.

We recognise a must in both of these cases. The flock of sheep must be cared for ; the doctor's skill must be had. True, but is there no must for the soul ?

What is a flock of sheep, what the body, what the whole world, to an immortal soul ? And yet men will show all assiduous care to preserve their sheep from being smothered in a snow wreath, or to get bodily healing, who utterly neglect their immortal souls.

Felix Neff, going along the street one day, saw a man whom he supposed to be a friend. He hastened after him and touched his shoulder, and said, as was his wont, "Friend, how is your soul to-day ?" The man turned quickly round ; Neff saw that he had made a mistake, and apologized. The question, however, found its way home to the stranger's heart. "My soul ! how is my soul ? Why, I have never lived as if I had a soul ! I have been utterly neglecting it !" He was so impressed with his folly that he was led wholly to change his ways, and to make his soul's welfare his great concern.

How strikingly our Lord puts that great must to Nicodemus! Nicodemus comes by night and acknowledges Him as a teacher come from God. Well, what does He teach? Why, this great must for the soul: "Ye must be born again, or ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Here, then, all the unspeakable value of the soul, which the world is all too small to exchange for, all its dear interests, all its eternal welfare, pressingly call upon us to give heed to meet that must—we must be born again, or we are undone for ever. For us, if we are not born again, there is no enjoyment of God's love upon earth, no cheering and supporting hope in death, no entrance into heaven's glory, only the just anger of God and torment among the lost for evermore.

The jailer\* saw that, and every truly awakened soul also sees it, and therefore he sprang in to Paul and Silas, crying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He saw that something must be done, and therefore he was urgent and intensely anxious.

Mary† was another type of one thoroughly alive to the interests of the soul. Hence, when Jesus came to their house, how she rejoiced in the glorious

\* Acts xvi. 30.

† Luke x. 38—42.

opportunity of seeking his guidance in that great matter! So engrossed is she with it, that she even forgets the common rites of hospitality, and throws herself open to Martha's rebuke. But, ah! how the Lord commends her! He sets his seal upon her earnest seeking the good of her soul. This was the one thing needful, before which every earthly thing dwindled into insignificance. She had chosen the good part, which should not be taken away from her.

Now all this must commend itself to us. We have but to examine the claims of God and of the soul to see their paramount importance. And yet, alas! how foolish we are prone to be! Admitting even our folly, and yet allowing ourselves to be carried away by the musts of the world, most of which are comparatively trifling, and many of them absolutely evil, to which we should say, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" We the while stilling the plaints of our consciences by mere resolves of future amendment! Ah! let us consider the end of such a course.

"Drifting away  
Like notes on the stream,  
To-day's disappointment  
Yesterday's dream ;

---

Ever resolving—  
Never to mend :  
Such is our progress :  
Where is the end ?”\*

Ah ! let us seek unto the Lord Jesus, who alone can save us from our sins, and turn ‘us effectually into a wise and holy way of living, so that all shall have a proper place—all that is true and good of earth having a proper measure of regard, but all crowned by the earnest concern for the glory of God and our soul’s eternal welfare..

“ Go up, go up, my heart,  
Be not a trifler here ;  
Ascend above these clouds,  
Dwell in a higher sphere.  
Let not thy love flow out  
To things so soiled and dim ;  
Go up to heaven and God,  
Take up thy love to Him.

“ Waste not thy precious stores  
On creature-love below ;  
To God that wealth belongs,  
On Him that wealth bestow.” †

\* Dean Alford.

† Dr. H. Bonar.



## II.

**TIME AND TIDE WAIT FOR NO MAN.**





ECCLESIASTES iii. 1.

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”

2 CORINTHIANS vi. 2.

“Behold, now is the accepted time.”

I HAVE often thought it would be a good work to write a history of books, showing the good they have been known to do, and any incidents connected with them. This subject full upon my mind, I came upon an anecdote which comes out rather curiously, and in a way to be remembered. It refers to the late Rev. Robert Shirra, of Kirkcaldy, whose life reached to 1803, but who had much of the quaint racy spirit of the grand old preachers of bygone times. It used to be the custom of the boatmen at Kinghorn Ferry, on the Firth of Forth, just before they started, to go bawling, “The boat, aho! to Leith, aho!” Well, one day when Mr. Shirra was preaching in the open air, he perceived

“lang Tam Galawa” with his fellow boatmen and passengers hurrying down to the ferry, and pausing in his discourse, he cried, “Boatmen, aho!” They instantly stopped to listen. “Boatmen,” he said, “you cry, ‘The boat, aho! to Leith, aho!’ You sail aneath Skipper Gallawa, we sail aneath Jesus Christ. We have Christ for our skipper, the Holy Spirit for our pilot, and God himself at the helm. Your boat, let me tell you, is but a fir deal frae Norawa—the keel o’ our boat was laid in Bethlehem, built in Judea, rigged in Jerusalem, launched on Calvary. We hae the cross o’ Christ for a helm, a cedar of Lebanon for a mast, and the redemption o’ mankind for a freight. Your voyage, under your earthly skipper, short as it is, may end in shipwreck; but our voyage, lang as it may be, wi’ Christ for our skipper, will end in everlasting joy and glory unspeakable. Slip awa noo, for ‘Time and tide will nae man bide.’”

This is curious enough, and though not to be followed on all occasions, is fitted to arrest the careless, and brings out well the force of this proverb, “Time and tide will no man bide.” He would give an advice of the highest kind. He does so briefly, and

they having got it must be off to their business, for neither time nor tide will tarry.

Now the great truth wrapped up in this old proverb is manifest. Neither time nor tide will wait. They will wait for no man. Whatever has got to be done during the time of the tide must be done at once, or the opportunity will be lost, and it left undone. These are great and solemn truths which all should consider; overlooking them ruins thousands.

#### TIME WAITS NOT.

It ever moves onward, "unhalting, unresting"—day and night—summer and winter, onwards ever. We may sleep or wake, labour or loiter, but it moves still. From birth to death, from age to age, onwards it "rolls its ceaseless course," until the angel with one foot upon the sea and the other upon the land, shall swear that "Time shall be no more!"

#### TIME WAITS FOR NO MAN.

It regards neither king nor beggar, but sweeps along. No hand of power can stay its sand from running out. No wealth can bribe it to pause. It

is deaf to all calls, heedless to a dying monarch's groans, crying, "Call time back again! call it back again! Let me have an hour, a single hour!" Ah! it hears not.

#### TIDE WAITS FOR NO MAN.

It is also beyond all human influence and control, and moves under a higher law than that of man. Day and night it comes punctual to the moment, flowing and ebbing, and ebbing and flowing, as it has been doing for thousands of years in the past. The embankment of an engineer may hem in its channel, or alter its course, but no power can forbid its flow. You know the old story of Canute the king, and how he rebuked the fulsome flattery of his courtiers who ascribed to him power which belongs to no mortal. He ordered a chair to be brought, and seating himself on the sea shore, when the tide was about to flow, he addressed the sea in this manner: "O sea, thou art under my dominion, and the land which I sit upon is mine; I charge thee to approach no further, nor dare to wet the feet of thy sovereign." The sea, heedless of this monarch's command, flowed on, showing to his

foolish courtiers, that to One being alone it appertains to say to the rising tide, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

Away out yonder on the Solway sands a gay party on horseback are seen. Two of them an hour ago were united with the dearest of all earthly ties. They are now crossing over to the other side, which they can do at low-water mark. They are now far from the shore, all joyous, and the merry laugh and chanting song cheer the way. No thought of danger darkens any brow, nor need there but for one thing, they have strangely loitered before leaving, and ere they can possibly reach the further shore the tide will be upon them.

Alas! it is so. A sullen murmuring sound is heard. Each rider is startled, and all wheel round and look seaward. Sure enough it is the tide. All along the sky line it is seen rushing on, with a head of foam. All fly for the nearest shore, and every steed is spurred to the utmost. But, alas! it availeth not. The tide remorselessly rusheth on, and gains upon them. In vain they strive and shout in agony, the pleasant song turned into wailing cries! Madly

it comes roaring on, and every rider is engulfed—the bridegroom and the bride are swept away. Alas! if beauty, or affection, or the cry of distress would have availed to stay it but for a half-hour more, all would have crossed in safety; but time and tide wait for no man!

But this is not the main idea implied in the proverb. It is not the mere certainty of the flow or ebb, but the *opportunity* that is indicated. You must mark this well. It is the opportunity that will not wait for any man.

To see the force of this we must go to yonder port, from which a vessel has been advertised to sail at full tide on a certain day. There is one who wishes to sail with that ship. All his earthly prospects hang upon his getting off with her. He has a distant relative who is dying at the port whither the ship is going. Word has come to him, that if he will come before he dies, he will make him his heir. He hurriedly sets out that he may secure a passage. But by one of those strange fatuities which so often possess men, he allows himself to be drawn into a house to drink with some old companions. Hour after hour passes unwittingly. The thought, how-

ever, at last rushes to his mind, and, grieved at his folly, he tears himself away, and then maketh all speed. Ah! it is all useless now; run breathless as he may, it boots not. His eager question is thus answered: "Why, the vessel has sailed some hours ago! The captain waited to the last moment, but had to sail without you. Time and tide, you know, will wait for no man. Why did you foolishly tarry so long?" Alas! his chance is quite lost, and he has to return lamenting that he has lost a fortune by his folly!

Time and tide wait for no man. In a thousand ways might the truth of this be illustrated. We must all have experienced how true it is by our own losses. It bears upon us in all our earthly concerns and must be remembered, or we shall be sufferers. How well does our greatest poet put this:—

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows, and in miseries.  
. . . we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our ventures."

But the greatest thing to note is that it bears full upon our highest concern, the interest of our im-

mortal souls. There being a time and tide in grace, too—a time in which God sends gracious warnings, and calls, and promises—a time in which Christ knocks at our door, and the Spirit strives with us. Such a time was that when the Spirit strove with man when the ark was a-building. Such a time when the Lord sent his prophets to his rebellious people, saying, “Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?” Such a time when Christ wept over Jerusalem, saying, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”

All depends upon how a man acts at such a time. If he is ever saved, it will be in the time and tide of the Lord's grace and mercy. This is awfully momentous. Yet it is but a time—but a tide which will flow graciously to our very door, higher and higher, until it comes to the full, and then begin to ebb and flow away. Ah! if we do not sail with God's tide, we are undone! No other tide can carry us to heaven. A hundred will flow, and lure us to commit ourselves to them; but they all flow hell-ward.



Yes, this time and tide which God gives us depends wholly upon his will. It is all of his free grace. We have no right whatever to it. We cannot purchase it. It simply lies with Him either to give or withhold. All we can surely tell is, that when the Lord is sending his gracious word, crying, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation," then is God's time and tide. When in any way we feel concerned, our hearts moved, then is the time and tide. When we feel peculiarly drawn to consider and turn to the Lord, whether it be by sanctified affliction, or the gracious stirring of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, or the appeals of the truth carried home to mind and conscience with unwonted power, then is God's time and tide. Ah! this precious opportunity should be seized at once. Let us not talk of a more "convenient season;" our time must bend to God's time. The flow of his tide must regulate us. We must embark then, if we would sail for the heavenly land.

What grace is this that such an opportunity of salvation should be granted to us! Shall we perversely bid God wait our time? No course is so provoking—none so ruinous to the soul. "Not for

nothing," says the late Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, "Not for nothing, O Lord, does any man grieve thy Holy Spirit and turn away from thy loving call. Refusing thy strength, we become weaker ; refusing to live by faith, heavenly things become darker to us ; despising thy long-suffering, our hearts become harder . . . and thou hast said, there is a state in which it is impossible to be renewed unto repentance."

Yet though all this must be so, all nature, all reason, all Scripture pointing out the sin and danger of delay in turning unto the Lord, yet it is now as of old. Men harden their hearts and procrastinate, all the while intending some day to turn to Him, until, like the coming of the flood upon the ungodly, they are for ever undone, swept in some tremendous judgment into endless perdition ! Two awfully solemn illustrations of this are given in an account of an evangelist's labours at Liverpool. Often the Lord makes the folly of delay manifest to all around, as in these cases. One Sunday night, preaching in Brunswick Hall, Liverpool, he observed a young woman weeping, and after he had done he went up to her, and asked her if she had a desire to give her

heart to God. "Yes," she said, "but not to-night." "You may never have another opportunity." "Well, not to-night," said she. He yearned over her, and as she left the hall he followed her down the steps into the street, telling her she had not a moment to call her own, and warning her of her danger. But she kept on saying, "Not to-night; not to-night." She went home, and the next morning at the breakfast-table said to her mother, "I was hearing the converted collier preach last night. I wish I had given God my heart." She went on telling her mother what had been said to her, and wished she had stopped and decided for God then. "Well," said the mother, "you can go and hear him next Sunday." "Oh, mother, I might not live till next Sunday. He told me I had not a moment to call my own. Oh, if I died now, where should I go?" Her mother began to take her breakfast, and persuaded her daughter to do the same. The poor young woman took the cup into her hand, saying, as she did so, "Oh, mother, if I die now I'm damned," and fell dead with the words in her mouth!

Another terrible instance of the danger of delay

occurred at the same time. A working-man in Liverpool came to the meetings at Brunswick Hall, and a Christian man pressed him to decide for the Lord. He said, "I'll come again." On the Saturday following, his master, who was a believer, said, "Now, I hope you will decide to be on the Lord's side." "Not to-day," said he; "I'm going to Brunswick Hall to-morrow night, and I shall decide then." He received his money and went away. When he got home, he opened the door, and with his hand yet on the latch he fell forward into his own house, dead!

"Sinner, come,  
While there's room,  
While the feast is waiting :  
While the Lord,  
By His Word,  
Kindly is inviting.

"Sinner, come ;  
Lo, the tomb  
Opens wide before thee !  
See death stand,  
Lift his hand, '  
Waiting to destroy thee."

Philip Henry said to some of his neighbours, who came in to see him on his death-bed, "O make

sure work for your souls, my friends, by getting an interest in Christ while you are in health. If I had that work to do now, what would become of me? I bless God I am satisfied. See to it, all of you, that your work be not undone when your time is done, lest you be undone for ever."

One word to the Lord's people. How blessed is the thought to the child of God that if time hurries away thus, it is carrying all his sorrows away with it! This tide, he through grace sails with, is bearing him on its bosom to the eternal haven of rest. Onwards, onwards, night and day, he is speeding to meet with his Lord, and to be introduced into the glorious company of the redeemed. Now is his salvation nearer than when he believed. Come what trials may in his course, whatever tempestuous blasts, grace shall carry him triumphantly through all, and land him in glory. And even now, he can go on his way singing—

"One sweetly solemn thought  
Comes to me o'er and o'er,—  
I am nearer home to-day  
Than I ever have been before.

"Nearer my Father's house,  
Where the many mansions be ;

Nearer the great white throne ;  
Nearer the crystal sea.

“ Nearer the bound of life,  
Where we lay our burdens down ;  
Nearer leaving the cross ; ,  
Nearer gaining the crown.

“ But lying darkly between,  
Winding down through the night,  
Is the deep and unknown stream,  
That leads at last to the light.

“ Jesus, perfect my trust  
Strengthen the hand of my faith ;  
Let me feel Thee near when I stand  
On the edge of the shore of death.

“ Feel Thee near when my feet  
Are slipping over the brink ;  
For it may be I'm nearer home—  
Nearer now than I think.”\*

\* Carey.

### III.

#### **ATHENIAN SCOFFERS.**





ACTS xvii. 18.

“What will this babbler say?”

**R**IDICULE is an old thing in the world. It is a great weapon by which ungodly men seek to bring discredit upon the truth they do not love. They would laugh it out of countenance. When the fires of persecution are no longer tolerated, the petty fires of mockery and ridicule are in full force. When the enemies of Christ could not answer his words, they said, “Thou hast a devil.” “Much learning hath made thee mad,” said Festus to Paul.

The truth of God has not been altogether singular in this treatment. The greatest minds in every age have suffered reproach, and have had their greatest discoveries sneered at. Was not Columbus treated as a visionary when he declared his conviction of the existence of a great western continent? Galileo met with even worse treatment when he attacked the old notions in regard to the earth being entirely

stationary, and that the sun and the heavenly bodies revolve round it. And did not George Stephenson meet with sneers and opposition, even from many of the learned, when he declared the possibility of running a carriage by steam along an iron railway at the rate of thirty miles or more an hour ?

I am quite aware that ridicule is not without its uses. Oft folly is best destroyed by its own shafts. It is oft not worthy of serious argument, and the best you can do is to expose it to the laugh of the world, and let it die away in its own shame. Professor Masson says very truly, "The power of sneering was given to man to be used ; and nothing is more gratifying than to see an idea which is proving a nuisance sent clattering away with a hue and cry after it, and a tin kettle to its tail."

This, no doubt, is a great power, and not a few of the Lord's servants have been wonderfully endowed with it. "Father Haynes," said two foolish young fellows to a coloured preacher one day, thinking to turn the laugh against him, "Father Haynes, have you heard the good news?" "No," said he; "what is it?" "It is great news indeed, and, if true, your business is done." "What is it?" again

inquired he. "Why, the devil is dead." In a moment the old gentleman, lifting up both hands, and placing them on the heads of the young men, said, in a tone of solemn concern, "O, poor fatherless children, what will become of you?" We can well imagine that he would not have any more trouble from these young fellows.

But there can be no doubt that it has been oft used against the truth of God, against all that is good, and true, and noble, used by mere wittlings, for want of better argument, and that it does infinite mischief. Thousands of the young are scared away by it. There are men who would sooner face a battery of cannon than endure the laugh and the sneers of the careless mockers at the truth. Hence their repugnance to act as conscience dictates, and as the word of God directs. They have not the courage to endure this opprobrium; they therefore trim, and make compromises, and go and bow in the "house of Rimmon," and yet strive to be Christians. Even good men, fully established, oft feel these sneering attacks most keenly. "This has been one of the worst nights," said a missionary in India, "I ever endured. Mockery, mockery! cruel mockery!

almost unbearable. I talked for a while on the blessings to be enjoyed by faith in Jesus Christ, when a man came with a hell-hardened countenance, and that peculiar constant laugh which I can hardly bear. The burden of his cry was, 'Juggernaut is the foundation! Juggernaut is completely God! Victory to Juggernaut!' He shouted, he laughed, and induced many to join him. On the ground of reason I fear no one, and rage I can bear; but these everlasting laughing buffoons are nearly too much for me." Yes, it has been too much for many. It may be, you would gladly confess Christ; but you lack the courage to stand these storms of ridicule in your families and workshops.

Well, now, we must not let the sneerers have it all their own way. There is nothing like taking these bulls of Bashan by the horns. These stinging nettles have only to be grasped manfully to lose all their power to hurt. We shall perhaps best do this by considering this old story about Paul, the Apostle of Christ. We find him in Athens, that famous old Greek city, of which you have heard. It was a place renowned for its learning, and men flocked to it that they might learn wisdom. And yet this

servant of Jesus, taught by the Spirit of God to know wisdom better than that of earth, had his heart stirred with the saddest thoughts at the sight of the city wholly given to idolatry. He cannot contain himself. He knew that his message must be unpalatable, but he must deliver it boldly; he must testify for the true God and Jesus his Son, whom He had sent to save men. Away, then, to the synagogue; and to the open market he went, and there he lifted up his voice for God and Christ. This soon got wind. There were many in Athens on the outlook for anything new. They hear of a strange fellow in the market-place, and curiosity constrains them to go and hear him. Yes, these philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics will go, yet with no true desire to be instructed. They would be ashamed to have it thought that they needed any instruction, and especially that such a fellow as this could teach them. "What will this babbler say? this ignorant Jew!" Curiously enough, the word babbler is, literally, a grain picker, or seed gatherer. It, doubtless, conveyed the idea of a mere liver upon scraps—a miserable beggar, who presumed to speak in the abundance of his ignorance.

Thus they go ; and yet, uneasy at the thought of it, they seek to fortify themselves against reproach for doing so, and against all light from Paul, by casting ridicule upon him.

Ah ! it has been the same in every age. The godly, faithful servant of Jesus, not afraid to declare the whole truth of God, has ever thus been treated. Take George Whitefield for example ; his whole ministerial course was attended by the sneers of reproach and ridicule. As Cowper writes :—He

“ Stood pilloried on Infamy’s high stage,  
And bore the pelting scorn of half an age ;  
The very butt of slander, and the blot  
For every dart that malice ever shot.  
The man that mention’d him at once dismiss’d  
All mercy from his lips, and sneer’d and hiss’d.”

What will this babbler say ? What can he say ? The idea of his coming to teach us of Athens ! What does he know ? Ah ! this old story is still new. Everything that is really true of man repeats itself from age to age. Spurgeon is a mere babbler with not a few—a man, no doubt, of wondrous powers of speech, but not a learned man, but full of fanaticism and spiritual pride !

Well, now, enough of this. The question is asked,—

WHAT WILL THIS BABBLER SAY?

Be it that he is a babbler. We shall hear what he says. "Strike, but hear." Lord Bacon says that jesting Pilate asked, "What is truth," and would not stay for an answer. This is unfair—an unfairness I bring as a charge against this whole class. A man sets up for an infidel, a free-thinker, a sneerer at Christ and salvation, and hisses out Babbler! Fool! at his fellow-man, who, out of the abundance of his heart's experience, speaks of the excellency of Christ, and the blessing of peace with God; and yet he has never honestly, humbly, prayerfully, examined the life of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, or made himself even intelligently acquainted with the evidence of the truth of Christianity.

Now, I propose that we shall not go away without hearing and considering what this babbler says. We shall, if we do so in a humble, teachable spirit, find that he declares great and solemn truths, the very highest which it concerns a man to know. He

speaks of the true God, and of repentance, and of judgment by Christ.

I.—HE DECLARED THE TRUE GOD.

It matters not what a man knows, if he is ignorant of the one only true God, he walks in darkness. The very highest truth of all he is ignorant of. He may know much of God's works—of their wondrous forms, their mechanism, their adaptation; but how sad that he is utterly ignorant of the Great Being who made all. Surely, to know Him is higher than to know his works. How clear it is that as long as an intelligent creature is ignorant of his Maker his happiness must be greatly circumscribed, if he can have any higher happiness at all than that which the material world affords, and how utterly ignorant he must be of the end of his being! He knows not why he is here, nor what he ought to do, so long as he knows not God. The history of our whole race proves this. Man feels the want, and seeks after a God. He does it blindly, like a man groping in the dark for the way he has wandered from. He goes further and further astray; or, it may be, he runs on in a weary circle. Like Lindsay in the old time,



who slew Roger Kirkpatrick, his host, in Caerlaverock Castle, in the dead of night, but who, after riding hard all the night, was taken in the morning not three miles from the castle, and hanged.

Man having lost his God, in his own blind way seeks vainly after Him, though He is not far from any one of us, for "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." He has not the light, however, to see this. In his darkness, not knowing better, he takes some creature, and says this is God. It may be the sun, or the moon, or a serpent, or a calf, or an ape, or, stranger still, he makes a god of wood, or stone, or metal. This is one of the saddest proofs of the utter debasement and ignorance of man. To think that he should ever commit such a folly! Yet it has been done, and not by the most debased of mankind alone, but by the most lettered, Why, done in this very Athens, the "eye of Greece!" All around, where Paul stood, he saw temples and statues. These were their deities, the gods of these proud men who called him a babbler! Ah! well, this despised Jew comes and tells them of the "unknown God," to whom they had dedicated a temple. He makes them know infinitely more in a

few words than all they had ever learned from all their philosophers. And how simple and grand is all this which he declares about God! He was the Maker of the world, the Lord of heaven and earth. He dwelt not in temples made by hands; neither was He worshipped with men's hands, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. He was the one common Father of all, who had made all of one blood. He sat King over all, determining the times, and the bounds of their habitations. Then he showed them the folly of their idolatry, in thinking that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, however curiously graven by art and man's device.

How strangely all this must have sounded! The light breaks in, and discovers the folly of their wisdom. It struck full against all these gods which they worshipped. Dagon could not stand before the Ark of the Lord.

## II.—HE DECLARES THAT GOD COMMANDED ALL MEN TO REPENT.

Paul was a practical preacher. He was speaking to the learned ones of Athens, and yet he charges home this great duty of repentance.

Some years ago two gentlemen were travelling through Annandale, in Scotland. It was a fine summer day. As they rode along, they saw a boy sitting on the grass by the wayside reading his Bible, and tending some cows. They thought they would have some amusement at the boy's expense—a poor thing for gentlemen to do, and much to be condemned when it related to divine things. “Well, lad,” said they, “you are reading your Bible. Can you tell us the way to heaven?” They meant to make a joke of it.

The boy, looking up, said, “The way to heaven is by yon tower,” pointing to an old tower that crowned the top of the hill they were skirting. They rode on, thinking the boy a fool, seeing no connection between the way past the tower and the way to heaven; but on inquiring the name of the tower from one they met, we may judge how they were put to shame by the boy's answer, when they learned that it was called “the Tower of Repentance.”

Yes, it is by way of repentance a man goes to heaven. “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,” said our Lord. Now, what is this repent-

ance, without which no one can reach heaven ? Well, the simple meaning of the word is, a “change of mind.” It is not mere shedding of tears, or fear of hell, or sorrow for the evil consequences of our sins. There may be all these, and no true repentance. Just think of it as a change of mind, and you will see what repentance really is. It is a change of mind towards God. Man’s whole thoughts and state of heart are wrong towards God. This is his sin. He thinks hardly of God ; he counts Him his enemy, and is at enmity with Him.

Now, God calls upon all to repent. These Athenians are called away from their idols to the true God ; and God is still sending forth this great command. He has made himself known in wondrous love by the gift of his Son to die to save us. As a forgiving God, He calls men to be reconciled to Him, to believe in his love and grace, to lay down the arms of their rebellion, to return, that they may be pardoned, and received into his favour, and fellowship, and service.

Ah ! friends, how wonderfully blessed is this ! It is a real command of grace—grace opening the door of life, and commanding the sinner to flee. Now,

if a man will not flee, if he will not believe in this love of God, if he will not change his thoughts about Him, if he will not return to Him, but keep afar off in league with Satan, then he must perish in his sin. "Father," said a dying Sabbath-school girl to her careless father, "can you spell repentance?" Spell repentance! Why, he had never thought of repentance at all, not to speak of spelling it. Strange as it may appear, this word of the dying child reached his heart by the power of the Spirit, and he was convinced of his folly, and led to seek the Lord.

### III.—HE PREACHED JUDGMENT TO COME.

This was the great and pressing incentive to repentance, and urgently calling for it. The angel called Lot to escape for his life. Judgment was coming down upon Sodom, and he will be consumed if he tarries. Ah! here lies the urgency of the call. If we will not repent—if we continue to live without God, and in antagonism to Him, then that judgment will come upon us to our eternal destruction. If a man will not leave the sinking ship, and cast himself into the life-boat, he must go down. If

a man, awakened out of sleep to find his house in flames, will not flee by the fire-escape, he must perish.

It stands in the nature of all these things. Would we not say, that man was such a fool that he would not be saved ?

Ah ! men are such fools, that, though God graciously calls them, they recklessly refuse to hear his entreating voice, and will not come to Him that they may have life. They will none of Him.

This may be your position. You will not listen to God, you will not believe in his love, you will not return to Him.

Well, what is to be the end, think you, of all that ? Mark how God unites judgment to love. It is by Christ He comes calling us to life, and it is by Christ we shall be judged. I pray you, mark this ; it is most significant—it shows the utter impossibility of the sinner escaping who would not accept of mercy by Christ, and the utter impossibility of any one being condemned who took refuge in Him. Christ being Judge in that Great Day, the one cannot escape, and the other cannot be lost.

Ah ! let all give heed to this. What a word of

grace is that, "The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance!" If God wills not that you should perish, and yet if you perish at last, your blood will be upon your own head. You must have willed your own destruction. Here, then, is the door of salvation opened to us Gentiles. Let us flee by it while God gives us that precious opportunity. O sinner, refuse not God's entreating voice:—

"Wilt thou still choose to die  
The death of deaths eternally?  
Dost thou not fear the gloom  
Of the eternal tomb?  
Wilt thou that life from heaven  
Reject? the life so freely given!  
Wilt thou choose sin and tears  
Through everlasting years?  
Wilt thou not seek His face?  
Wilt thou not turn and own the grace?  
Wilt thou not take the heaven  
So freely to thee given?" \*

\* Dr. H. Bonar.





## IV.

**THE HIGHLAND KITCHEN-MAID :**

**A STORY AND ITS LESSONS.**



2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 5.

“ Know ye not your own selves ? ”

JOHN xvii. 3.

“ And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”

JESUS, the Son of God, when in the world, bearing witness concerning the truth, spoke much to his hearers by way of parable. It seemed to be the mode He chiefly delighted in. We know how singularly beautiful his stories are—how great their mere literary merit—above all, how full of grace and truth ; how they hold up that which is base and foolish to scorn, and how they endear and glorify all that is good and wise ; and above all, what precious discoveries they give of the love of God our heavenly Father.

I need make no apology to you for telling you a grand story, first told by an old fellow-student,\*

\* “The Highland Kitchen-maid.” By the Rev. T. M. Fraser  
Glasgow : W. R. McPhun.

about a poor servant-maid ; how she got to see her sad sinful state, and how she afterwards got another great sight, which met this and filled her heart with peace unspeakable.

About one hundred years ago there lived in the parish of Resolis, on the southern shore of the Frith of Cromarty, a minister of the name of Hector McPhail. He was one of those men of mark who become such a power for good, that their names become dear household words over the wide districts where they have lived. Truly, that is a fame to be coveted above all.

An ardent man of God he was, ever instant in his work. He himself had passed through a long period of sore trial ere he found rest for his soul. That spiritual distress seems ever after to have made souls very precious to him, so that his one great work was to seek to win them to the Saviour.

Appointed one year as a member of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, he set out to ride to Edinburgh on his shaggy white pony, his constant companion. The journey was a long one, and consequently he was often obliged to lodge in inns by the way. His invariable custom was to

have family worship in these houses. Resting one night on his way in a small inn amid the wild hills of Inverness-shire, he desired that all should come in to worship. When they had taken their seats, he asked the landlord if all were in. He answered rather hesitatingly, "Yes." "All?" asked Mr. McPhail. "Yes," said the landlord, "we are all here. There is a little lassie in the kitchen, but we never think of asking her in, for she is so dirty that she is not fit to be seen."

"Call in the lassie," said Mr. McPhail, laying down his Bible, "we will wait till she comes." The landlord still wished her excused. No; she must come. Scullery-maid though she is, she has a precious soul. If she has been excluded before from worship, all the more need for her being present now. She must come. He will take no denial.

The poor girl, for whose soul no one had cared, comes and takes her place, and so the worship proceeds. After he had finished, Mr. McPhail called the little girl aside, and sought to know her state. As was to be expected, in the case of one so overlooked, he found her deplorably ignorant.

He asked her who made her. She did not know.

“Do you know that you have a soul?” “No; I never heard that I had one. What is a soul?”

“Do you ever pray?” I don’t know what you mean.”

Saddened at heart to find her mind such a blank, the good man gave her some instruction, and said to her, “Now, I am going to Edinburgh, and I will bring you a little neckerchief if you promise to say a prayer night and morning that I will teach you. It is a very short one. There are only four words in it: *Lord, show me myself.*”

The girl entered heartily into this, and promised not to fail to say this prayer, which, no doubt, the minister would explain somewhat to her. He retired to rest, leaving in the morning.

When in Edinburgh, amid all his duties there, he did not forget the girl at the Highland inn. He purchased the small present for her, and, I doubt not, besought God in his own prayers on her behalf.

The meetings over, he turned his face towards the north again. Again he stops to lodge for the night at the small inn. As before, he calls for the presence of the household to worship. He misses the little

maid. Why has she not come in? Ah! there is a different reason now from the former time.

"Indeed, sir," said the landlady, "she has been of little use since you were here. She has done nothing but sit and cry night and day, and now she is so weak and exhausted, that she cannot rise from her bed."

The minister knowing well what would be the reason, begged to be taken to the poor girl at once.

He was led to a miserable hole beneath the stairs, where the girl lay upon her straw-bed, full of agony of soul.

"Well, my child," said Mr. McPhail, "here is the neckerchief I have brought you from Edinburgh. I hope you have done what you promised, and said the prayer."

"O no, sir, no," she cried out, "I can never take your present. A dear gift it has been to me. You taught me a prayer that God has answered in an awful way. He has shown me myself, and oh what a sight it is! Minister, minister, what shall I do?"

Yes, the Lord had heard the girl's prayer, and had made her see what she really was in his sight, who is the just and holy One, and the sight appalled

her. She saw only sin, sin, and her conscience aroused and enlightened cried out. Hence her grievous distress, issuing even in bodily exhaustion. The sight of herself was too sad—the burden of her sins too heavy for her to bear.

This good minister knew well what the girl's feelings were, and while he felt deeply for her distress, he must have blessed God that He had wrought so powerfully in her heart. He knew well that wounding must go before a cure—casting down before any one can truly be raised up. And he was greatly encouraged to direct her again to that God who had opened her eyes to see herself. He knew that what she wanted to give rest to her troubled heart was a discovery of God himself in the fulness of his love and grace in Jesus. Speaking to her much, therefore, of God, he taught her another prayer, which he begged her not to fail now to use: "*Lord, show me thyself.*" He left in the morning, commending the little troubled maid unto the God of all grace. How hopefully he must have turned away from that inn, believing that grace was working powerfully there, and that light and joy would assuredly arise upon that troubled heart!



Many years passed over this minister of Christ. Removed far from the inn in Inverness-shire, he neither had seen nor heard of the maid since. He had become old in his Master's service. One day his servant came in to tell him that a woman wished to see him. She was ushered in, bringing a large parcel with her.

"You will scarcely know me, Mr. McPhail," said she. He did not. "Do you remember a little scullery-maid, some years ago, at an inn, in whose soul you took a deep interest upon your journey to Edinburgh?" He perfectly recollected the incident. "I was that girl," said she; "you taught me two short but expressive prayers. By the first, I was brought to feel my need of a Saviour; by the second, I was led to behold that Saviour himself, and to view Jehovah in the character of a reconciled God and Father in Christ. I am now respectably married and comfortably settled in life; and although the mother of a numerous family, have travelled far to see your face and to cheer you, by telling with my own lips the glorious things which, by your means, the Lord has been pleased to do for my soul." She begged him to accept

the parcel which she carried, which contained a large web of linen, which she had made for the man who, under God, had done her soul so much good.

We may well imagine how the old minister rejoiced, and gave God thanks for that striking display of his grace. The woman lived to an old age, still holding fast and greatly adorning her profession by a holy life.

How striking a story is this ! How it comes home to every heart, powerful in its very simplicity, impressing us deeply with the importance of both these prayers ! Lord, show me myself. Lord, show me thyself.

I.—LORD, SHOW ME MYSELF.

The best preachers are they who speak from their own experience. It is not mere theory or doctrine with them. It is something which they have felt themselves. Hector McPhail, when he taught the servant-maid the prayer, was only following out a great lesson he had learned himself.

When he began his ministry, like many ministers, he had never got a sight of himself. He only

preached what he had been taught by man. Like Dr. Chalmers, in his early ministry, he was honest. But yet all was dark. He had not had the first great sight—a view of himself.

He was still in that state when he got married. His wife was one who had found Jesus, and loved his name. She soon found that her husband's preaching was sadly wanting. She grieved over this, and her own soul got famished and went back. Still, for a long time, she could not think of naming the matter to him. But under the pressure of spiritual want, she mustered courage one Sabbath morning to ask her husband to allow her to go that day to hear her old minister preach. To her surprise, her husband instead of feeling hurt and refusing, at once consented, and said he would see her safely across the ferry.

So they went. He left her to return to his own church to preach. She went on for the manse of Kilmuir. Her old minister, Mr. Porteous, was greatly surprised when he saw her, and feared something was wrong. She told him no; she had only come to have the privilege of hearing him preach again.

Mr. Porteous suspected the real cause, and feeling deeply for Mrs. McPhail, he sought an early opportunity of retiring that morning and pouring out his cry to God, that he would enlighten his brother minister, and gladden the poor wife's heart.

Ah ! his prayer was soon heard, as well as, doubtless, the cry which his wife often sent up for him. Mr. McPhail, though he had left his wife to return home, did not do so. The time for the commencement of public worship came, but still he had not arrived. Hour after hour passed, when his people got greatly alarmed, and set out to search for him.

Late in the day, searching in a wood, they were startled by the sound of loud sobbing and earnest cries coming from some one in deep distress. It was their minister upon his knees, convinced deeply of his sin, and in great agony of mind.

Shortly after he had left his wife his conscience began to smite him. Why was it that his own wife was not satisfied with his preaching? Ah ! the reason was clear to him ; he preached not the truth, because he did not know it. He was led home, but the arrow was in his heart. He had got a view of himself, and he saw that all was vile.

Long, long it was, ere he got rest. But when he did, he ever after saw the importance of a man seeing himself, in order to his ultimately finding true rest for his soul.

Ignorance of a man's own state lies at the root of his hopeless condition. There is no hope of him as long as he does not know himself. He is blinded by the god of this world, deceived, puffed up with pride and false hopes. Therefore he is bold and unconcerned.

Are you a stranger to fear? Can you mock at these things? And do you live at ease, though you know you have to die, and to appear before God? Then you really are ignorant of yourself. It is not because you are in no danger, but because you are blind to it.

But we care not to obtain that knowledge. We shrink from it. We are therefore willingly blinded. Men are ready to catch at deceptions. And even though there were an honest desire to know our real state, we should soon find that we have no means in ourselves of knowing it. We are so dark and perverted with false views.

Ah! there is nothing for it but that we use the

maid's prayer, "Lord, show me myself;" the while reading his word diligently. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts," said David. Yes, when we truly come to God and his word for the knowledge of ourselves, we soon are stripped of all our false hopes and conceits, and stand in our great demerit convicted as sinners before God.

And need we wonder at the distress which fell upon the poor girl, when the Lord showed her herself? Can a man be aroused in the dead of night by the cry that his house is in flames, and not tremble and flee?

Job could speak and defend himself with his friends; but how altered is his speech when God speaks! "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

How could the poor girl but tremble? It is whole, unwounded, blind hearts, that can be indifferent. Let the light of God enter, God's arrows of conviction pierce the heart, and then a man can no longer remain careless. I once heard of a farm-servant in Scotland, who got such a view of himself

while ploughing one day, that he was quite paralyzed. All strength went from the man, and he had to be carried home and put to bed. It was the sight of his sins which did it all. A great big fish-wife at Newhaven, near Edinburgh, who was a great mocker at all that is good, and who swore and stormed when any one spoke to her about salvation, one day, coming in from selling her fish, saw a tract lying upon her table. Some person had laid it there for her. Taking it up to see what it was, she read, "Reader, do you know that your sins are forgiven?" She dropped the tract upon her lap for a moment. "Know that my sins are forgiven? Why, I know nothing about it. I have never concerned myself about my sins." So she reasoned. The light flooded her mind from God's Spirit. She saw herself in that light, and was so overwhelmed that she sank on the floor, crying out in agony of soul. The neighbours came running in, and found the woman who was so bold and careless trembling before God!

Is this strange or foolish? Who dare say it is? I once knew a woman who, visiting a deep lime-stone-mine, had in the dim light wandered away

from her party. She was going on alone, when all at once a guide, who got his eye upon her, shouted to her to take care. She was riveted to the spot by the cry; and looking before her, she saw that had she gone one step farther, she would have stepped into a deep pit! Years after she trembled at the very thought of the danger she was in. Ah! how can poor sinners have their eyes opened to see that they are going headlong to eternal ruin and not terribly fear and quake?

And how well it is when sinners do begin to tremble! Thank God if you see that all is wrong with you. Thank God if you are thoroughly aroused. Old Samuel Rutherford says, in his quaint way, "The only thing that will bring sinners within a cast of Christ's drawing arm is some feeling of death and sin." "The more pain, and the more night-watching, and the more fevers, the better. A soul bleeding to death till Christ were sent for, and cried for in all haste to come and stem the blood, and close up the hole in the wound with his own hand and balm, were a very good disease when many are dying of a whole heart."

But where is the cure for the evil we see, when



the Lord gives us a sight of ourselves? It is well that we know our state if we are diseased; but the knowledge does not cure. Self can never cure self. We have destroyed ourselves. We see this when the Spirit of God opens our eyes and tears away Satan's veils. Ah! but what then? What will cure your poor soul? What will set it free from guilt and sin? What will give it rest? A sight of God alone in Christ. We must use that other prayer.

## II.—LORD, SHOW ME THYSELF.

Strange that the cure for man's sin and misery should be in that God against whom he has sinned. Man fell at first by believing a lie about God, and now he can only be saved by believing the truth about God.

Examine Satan's deceit at first, was it not a base insinuation that God was keeping man down, and in some way serving his own selfish ends at man's cost? This was the essence of his lie. Man falls into the snare, and hoping by that bold act of disobedience to become a God, he plunges himself into a state of condemnation, misery, and death.

Follow out man's thoughts of God, and you will find the old deceit working still—distrust of God—enmity still reigning. God in his majesty dreaded, not honoured, not trusted in.

This is man's character. But when he gets truly to see himself, when all his fond delusions are destroyed, and he trembles at the sight of his ruined state, then does he see at once his sin, and the utter hopelessness of delivering himself out of God's hands, or escaping his just anger. It is in the light of God's holiness and terrible justice he sees the sadness of his state, and the absolute certainty of wrath to come. How, then, can he abide the coming of this great Jehovah?

Ah! how can hope come to such a soul? Not upon his righteousness, or tears, or gifts can it be founded. They are naught all. These cannot meet God's just demands.

Now, it is here where the wondrous grace of God appears. All that is so. Sin a reality—law a reality—condemnation a reality. How, then, can the sinner be saved? He never could but for what God has done. "God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Then grace bursts forth, bringing salvation, shouting Peace, peace. "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son." It was to man, fallen, a sinner, He sent his Son,—for what purpose? To bear our sins in his own body on the accursed tree. He sent Him to make atonement and reconciliation for sin. All this He did. It is a fact accomplished. And now God is proclaiming himself as a God with whom there is forgiveness. He is well pleased in his Son. He is reconciling the world unto himself in his Son. He is beseeching men to be reconciled.

Ah! then, here is hope, life, joy for the poor sin-convicted soul. Let him know this God, and all his fears will give place to joy. "Lord, show me thyself." Ah! thus the poor maid, from her miserable bed under the stair, began to cry, "Show me thyself!" How that poor, panting heart, in her sore darkness, scared by the sight of her own sin and the wrath coming speedily down, sought to know this God whom she so feared, that she might creep for refuge under his wings, and be saved by his love! And as she prayed in hope, as the good minister assured her she ought, her troubled spirit

somewhat calmed, there came a glorious light from God flooding in upon her soul; and in that light she beheld God reconciled to her in his Son—not angry with her—wrath all gone—full of tender love—gracious exceedingly! And as she looked she rejoiced. She saw that she had destroyed herself; but in the Lord was her help. How gracious was that discovery! How she was cheered by the sight, and strengthened with his words of peace! She could then say, “O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid.”

Ah! here is a great lesson, indeed, to weary, sin-burdened souls—weary of sin, of self, of the world. Let them cry to the Lord to show himself to them. And soon the light of his glory, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, will break in upon their dark, troubled hearts, and fill them with joy. Then they also shall be able to sing—

“I thought upon my sins, and I was sad,  
My soul was troubled sore, and filled with pain;  
But then I thought on Jesus, and was glad,  
My heavy grief was turned to joy again.

"I thought upon the law, the fiery law,  
Holy, and just, and good in its decree ;  
I looked to Jesus, and in Him I saw  
That law fulfilled, its curse endured for me.

"I thought I saw an angry, frowning God  
Sitting as Judge upon the great white throne.  
My soul was overwhelmed ; then Jesus showed  
His gracious face, and all my dread was gone.' \*

\* Dr. H. Bonar.



V.

POOR JOSEPH. AND THE TEXT WHICH GAVE HIM  
PEACE.





1 TIMOTHY i. 15.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

**A**BOUT two hundred years ago there lived in London a poor man named Joseph. Being but half-witted, he was not fit for any higher employment than that of running errands or carrying parcels. A humble man, spending his life in poverty and monotonous toil. A most unlikely man to become famous, and yet his name has got inseparably linked with this text, so that it cannot be read without its calling up poor Joseph. It was the grace of God which, falling upon him, made his name luminous, and lighted up his life with heaven's gladness. The story is full of interest and instruction.

Going along one day carrying a large parcel of yarn, passing St. Mary's Church, Aldermanbury, he heard the sound of praise. Curiosity, or it may be some higher yearning, led him to enter. He slipped

in with the yarn hanging on his shoulder. He must have been abashed when he saw the well-dressed audience. But his attention was soon riveted by the preacher. He was the famous Dr. Calamy, afterwards so well known as one of the leading Non-conformist divines. A faithful, pointed preacher he was, honoured to do a great work for the Lord in his day. He gave out this text—1 Timothy i. 15—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." He was ever a forcible preacher, but it seems he was peculiarly helped that day to proclaim the glorious salvation of Jesus to poor sinners. What effect it had upon the genteel part of the audience we know not. It may be it was listened to with indifference, as something very simple and very stale. To poor Joseph it was the "*power of God unto salvation.*" His attention was at once arrested, and, gazing with astonishment at the preacher, he drank in every word to the close. Wondering at all he had heard, as he trudged homeward, he was heard thus muttering to himself: "Joseph never heard this before. Christ Jesus, the God who made all things, came into

the world to save sinners like Joseph! And this is true; and it is a faithful saying!"

The seed of life had been lodged in the poor man's heart, and it soon bore fruit. Shortly after Joseph was seized with fever, and became dangerously ill. As he tossed upon his bed, his constant language was, "Joseph is the chief of sinners, but Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and Joseph loves Him for this." The neighbours wondered to hear him dwell so much upon this, and this alone; and not quite liking his simple faith, asked him, "But what say you of your own heart, Joseph? Is there no token for good about it? No saving change there? Have you closed with Christ by acting faith upon Him?" These foolish counsellors, like many still, would drive him from simple trust in what he had heard about Jesus to the actings of his own heart for peace! "Ah, no," said he, "Joseph can act nothing; Joseph has nothing to say for himself, but that he is the chief of sinners; yet seeing that it is a faithful saying, that Jesus, who made all things, came into the world to save sinners, why may not Joseph, after all, be saved?"

One man, on finding where he had heard the doctrine, went and asked Dr. Calamy to come and visit him. He came, but Joseph was now so weak that he had not spoken for some time. They told him of the Doctor's arrival, but he took no notice of him. As soon, however, as he heard his voice, he sprang upon his elbows, and, seizing his hands, exclaimed with his trembling voice, "Oh, sir, you are the friend of the Lord Jesus, whom I heard speak so well of Him. Joseph is the chief of sinners; but it is a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ, the God who made all things, came into the world to save sinners, and why not Joseph? Oh, pray to that Jesus for me; pray that He may save me. Tell Him that Joseph thinks that he loves Him for coming into the world to save such sinners as Joseph."

The Doctor prayed for him, and Joseph thanked him warmly; and putting his hand under his pillow, he took out an old rag in which were tied five guineas, and putting them into the Doctor's hand, which he had kept all the while closed in his, he said, "Joseph, in his folly, had laid this up to keep him in his old age; but Joseph will never see

old age. Take it, and divide it amongst the poor friends of the Lord Jesus; and tell them that Joseph gave it them for his sake, who came into the world to save sinners, of whom he is chief." Thus having, by a great exertion, declared how his heart clung to Jesus, as all his hope, he laid himself back upon his bed, and instantly expired.

Dr. Calamy himself told the story with tears, as one of the most affecting incidents that ever occurred to him. And how many since have learned the way of peace from the simple confidence of this poor, half-witted man! Let us hear and believe what this text says, and we also shall see that, though we be the chief of sinners, there is no reason why we should not be saved by this Great and Almighty Saviour.

It is the experience of one of the most remarkable of men concerning Christ Jesus. At one time Paul was decidedly opposed to Him. He considered it his duty, from the most conscientious motives, thinking he did God service, to persecute all who owned Him as their Lord. But his views concerning Christ were completely changed. He saw that he had been wholly in error, and at His call he gave himself to

his service in the ministry of the gospel. He preached the faith he once destroyed; and never was there a more indefatigable labourer. In season, out of season, he delighted to make known the glad tidings. And this change arose from no interested motives. He sacrificed all his worldly hopes for Christ. In his service he endured the greatest privations. For his name he at last suffered death. The testimony of such a man is peculiarly valuable. How clearly does it show the truth of the record regarding Christ. Nothing but the certain conviction of its truth—that Christ was no impostor, but the real Messiah, the Saviour whom the prophets of old foretold—could have produced such a change in him. He thought himself right before, and therefore he persecuted Christ. He sees now that he was wrong, and therefore he preaches Christ. But the testimony of such a man is valuable in another most important aspect. It tells not only that the tidings concerning Christ are true, but it tells how great is his salvation, ~~how~~ deep the love of Jesus is. Paul had been a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, but he had found mercy. His past sins are all forgiven; he enjoys the love of Christ, is employed by

Him as one of his dearest servants, and honoured in the highest degree with the most blessed revelations. How well is he fitted, then, not only to tell that the glad tidings of salvation through Christ are true, but also to tell, from his own blessed experience, how free this salvation is, how ready Christ is to save even the very chief of sinners! It is the feeling of this, the certain conviction of its truth, the joyful experience of its blessedness, which makes him exclaim, "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Let us consider this testimony of Paul. The Lord give us to feel as he did.

I.—THE SAYING.

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." He speaks of it as a saying, something that was affirmed by many, and as a report well known to all. It was the one great saying which apostles and evangelists proclaimed wherever they went. The burden of every sermon they preached was just that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This was the good news to all people.

Wherever they went, they preached Christ. The saying therefore became well known.

The apostle here then speaks of Jesus, whose claims were disallowed by many. He testifies concerning his exalted character, and the important nature of the mission He came to discharge. He remembered how in times past he had blasphemed his holy name, and he knew that still He was despised and rejected by many, and he delights to hold Him forth in his glory. The Jews said of Jesus that He was the son of Joseph the carpenter. They counted Him as no better than his lowly brethren. Their proud spirits rose against his claims. He came unto his own, but his own received Him not. At length they took and crucified Him. But in opposition to all these false opinions of blinded men, the glory of his character is held forth. We are led to regard Him before He came into the world. We see Him dwelling in the bosom of the Father throughout the ages of eternity, as his only begotten son—the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person—equal with, and one with, the Father and the Holy Spirit. He was the Maker of all things, and upheld all by the



word of his power : He was the life and the light of men.

Then he tells us *what He did* :—" Christ Jesus came into the world." He whose throne was in the heavens, who was worshipped and adored by countless numbers of angelic beings, the great Maker of this world with all that it contains—He from whom all derive life, and breath, and all things, came into the world. It was a very different visitation from any of the past. He had always been in a sense in the world ; but now He appeared openly in it. He became a man—tabernacled with men—walked, and worked, and lived, and at length died among men.

*His object in coming*—" He came to save sinners." " Speak the word only," said the centurion, when he came to Christ, asking Him to heal his servant—" Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." But something more was necessary in order that men should be saved from their sins, and healed of their spiritual malady. Sin is an evil of a much sorer kind, much more difficult to be got rid of in its guilt and in its power than most men think. In order to save sinners, it was needful for

Christ, the Son of God, to come thus into the world. He must abase Himself to become a man. In that character, and in that alone, could He accomplish the work of man's salvation. How mighty a work, then, must the salvation of sinners be! What an interest it stamps upon the coming of Christ! He came to seek and save the lost.

This was the end for which He came, and *how* did He accomplish it? They were under the law of God. It was holy and just and good—obedience to its requirements was what they owed to God; but they had not rendered it. They broke this law, and were therefore shut up under its condemning sentence. Their case was thus wholly desperate. They could not meet the guilt they had incurred in any other way than by suffering eternal death. And even supposing this guilt cancelled, such was their depraved state that they could not have rendered that obedience to the law which would still have been required. It is clear, then, that salvation was altogether impossible on the footing of their personal obedience. But Christ Jesus came to save sinners, and therefore He took their place. He was made man under the law. He put Himself in this

position entirely on their behalf; what He did and suffered was in their room and stead; He took their place under the law, and obeyed all its precepts perfectly in thought, word, and deed. But the law demanded the death of the sinner, and Christ also met this demand. He suffered for our sins; He died, the just for the unjust. Men do not see any need for all this; they do not see sin in such an awful light as to merit damnation. But God thus looks upon it, and all who will not take warning will see it in their own eternal ruin. Christ Jesus, by thus obeying the law, and thus suffering its penalty, opened the door of salvation to sinners. He became himself this door. By Him all may enter in and be saved. And as He became the Saviour of sinners by entering into their position, so they experience this salvation by entering into his. In Him they receive a righteousness which meets the requirements of the holy law of God. His blood, shed as an atonement for sin, cleanses away their guilt. They may thus be accepted in this glorious deliverer, this beloved one of the Father; and in Him thus stand in a state of acceptance, and become partakers of a new quickening and holy life,

whereby they will live in all love unto God. This was the saying, then, of which Paul spoke, and which was the great theme of his ministry. As Moses directed the dying children of Israel to the brazen serpent, the apostles sought to turn the eyes of sinners for salvation to this Jesus who was lifted up upon the cross. In Him the fountain of life anew was opened, and all might have life in Him.

## II.—THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS SAYING.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.”

It is a *faithful saying*. That which of old he thought to be false he sees now to be true. His mind is wholly changed as to it. It is a faithful saying—a saying that tells no lie, that bears a true testimony, and which is altogether trustworthy. One upon which sinners may lean the whole weight of their souls’ salvation without one fear. You may have heard of James Durham, a good minister of the Lord Jesus, who lived in Glasgow about two hundred years ago. When on his death-bed he was under considerable darkness about his state, and

said to a friend, "For all that I have preached or written, there is but one scripture I can remember or dare grip unto; tell me if I dare lay the weight of my salvation upon it: 'Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out.'" His friend answered, "You may depend upon it, though you had a thousand souls to be saved." This is a faithful saying; you need not hesitate to give it all your trust and confidence. Here you have firm ground upon which to rest. We may not be saved; eternity may find us in hell; but yet it is true that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. We may not give this saying our confidence; we may put our trust in some lie of Satan; or we may give way to distressing fears. Yet this is a saying that will not deceive; it is faithful; it is worthy of all acceptation; its truth makes it worthy, for truth should be dear to all. But specially it is worthy of being accepted by all, as it bears upon and concerns all. All have wants of the most pressing kind, which this alone can meet. They are under condemnation because of the guilt of sin; this saying tells of One whose blood cleanses from all sin. They have not peace with God; it tells of Him who made

peace through the blood of his cross, and who is the Prince of Peace. They are dead in trespasses and sins, and are the slaves of Satan ; it tells of One who saves from sin, who sets the prisoners free, who delivers from every spiritual enemy, and who can make them holy unto God ! They are children of the wicked one exposed to eternal misery ; but it tells of one who has opened up a way by which they may return to God, and enjoy life evermore. Ah ! is it not therefore worthy of all acceptance.

My friend, do not treat this with indifference. This word of grace concerning Christ Jesus comes to you. It is *faithful* ; it is *worthy* ; receive it in faith as your *warrant* to cast the whole weight of your soul's salvation on Christ, and you will find sweet rest in Him, and joy and light, assuring of life eternal when time's trials are all over.

**VI.**

**THE RINGING OF THE BELL; OR, HOW FAITH  
SAVES.**





LUKE xviii. 42.

"Thy faith hath saved thee."

EVERYBODY knows the question which the jailor put to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And everybody knows the answer which they gave him: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It by no means follows that all are clear as to what the answer means, or that it is generally received. The fact is, there is nothing in regard to which there is more earnest questioning on the one hand, or sneering and quibbling on the other. There are hundreds in these days, there may be some here, who, feeling their sinful state before God and the sad consequences of it, are earnestly seeking rest and hope for their souls, who yet are in the deepest perplexity as to how faith can save them. There are others quite the reverse of these, who, though undisturbed by any alarms of conscience, have been carrying

their studies into the domain of faith and salvation, and who, wanting the prerequisite humility and right sense of their relation to God, and puffed up with their own conceit, ridicule the way of salvation by faith in Jesus as utterly absurd and opposed alike to common sense and reason. Just to bring out the views of this class in the best form in which they can be put, let me quote the words of one of these men: "I am willing to do all that can be done. . . . I am willing to do the best I am able; and I claim that what I do shall be the ground of my justification, and not what I happen to believe. I say pointedly what a man believes has nothing to do with his right to salvation and his right to heaven, and he who preaches any other doctrine preaches a hurtful doctrine." This is certainly sad enough, but there is a direct manliness about it which one likes, though it manifests a grievous misconception of the whole matter. I think I can make this evident to you, and can prove that salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus, the Son of God alone, while we could only have known of it by direct revelation from God, is not dark or mysterious, nor opposed to the reason of man. I could easily show you that

we have much that is analogous with it all around us in the relations in which men are placed. But I shall specially show you how reasonable it is from the incident of the ringing of a bell.

“Strange,” some will say; “what connection is there between the *ringing of a bell* and *faith saving*?” You may well wonder, though the ringing of a bell is suggestive, and full of sweet and solemn thoughts, recalling bygone years of childhood, and lover’s trysting-times, Sabbath calls to worship,—alas ! times also in which we were called to part with our dearest ones and to bury them out of our sight. All these are full of teaching, but they fail to cast any light upon how faith saves. And yet one of the most precious lights on faith saving I ever got was from the simple incident of the ringing of a bell.

The incident is an old one to me now, yet it left its deep impress upon my memory most suggestive of thought, and casting a true light upon the great topic. It happened when I was attending the New College in Edinburgh. I had come from Dr. Chalmers’s class and was walking down Frederick Street, when my attention was arrested by a little girl who was standing by a door trying hard to ring the bell.

She stood on her tip-toes and stretched her body to the utmost again and again ; but all would not do, she could not nearly reach the bell-handle. When she had fairly proved that it was beyond her ability she gave up the effort and turned from the door, and looked up and down the street to find some one to help her. Seeing me, she came tripping down the steps, and running to me, asked if I would ring the bell for her. I did so, and the little creature with a happy, thankful look took her place at the door, never doubting but it would now be opened for her.

As I turned away, pleased not a little with the simplicity of the child, I said to myself, " Ah ! how much more light this casts upon salvation by faith than is oft found in large volumes by learned divines ! " I think you will see this also when I point out its analogies and the train of thought it called up. You see three things in regard to this little child :—

1. Her earnest desire to get into the house.
2. Her utterly unsuccessful personal efforts.
3. How she at last obtained entrance. Now look at these in regard to the great question before us.

I.—HER EARNEST DESIRE TO GET INTO THE  
HOUSE.

She was most intent upon it. I know not why. It may have been her father's house, or she may have had a pressing errand there. She was therefore bent upon being in. Now the type of this is the sinner awakened to concern about his soul's salvation. The great mass are utterly careless about these things. But he has got his eyes opened to his true position, and is convinced of his folly, and sin, and danger. He can be at ease no longer. As one awakened during the night with the cry that his house is in flames, or as one at sea by the crash of the ship upon a rock, he is thoroughly aroused. He sees his madness in his neglect of these things, and that he has been running on to sure death and eternal misery. Ah! how anxiously does he now desire to be saved! It is to him the one thing needful. All is insignificant besides—his business nothing, his worldly gains nothing, in comparison with the salvation of his soul. He would be saved now; for that he longs and prays. Ah! is it so with you?

II.—HER UTTERLY UNSUCCESSFUL PERSONAL  
EFFORTS.

Determined to get into the house, how she did strive! She put forth every effort in her power. But all was vain, she could not reach the bell-handle. It was impossible then for her to get into the house. The bell must be pulled or the door will not be opened; she could not pull it. Ah! how plain the analogy here is to the case of an awakened sinner! He is intent upon being saved, he craves it above all besides, but he cannot save himself. He has destroyed himself, and he cannot undo his evil work. We see illustrations of this everywhere. It is easier to destroy than to raise up. A great blundering hand may break an intricate machine in pieces, as the awkward neighbour did the watch which James Ferguson had made, when he let it fall and crushed it with his foot, but he cannot restore it. How soon the sinner finds this; pressed by his sad state, he does many things. He labours, and strives, and strains every nerve, like the child. Ah! he would be saved, he would have God's love and favour, he would get into his Father's house again. But there

are his sins and his guilt all uncanceled. He strives to be pure and holy and to please God, but all is naught. His "tears need to be washed, and his repentance to be repented of." He has no purity, no perfection; sin is dragging him down, his old nature carrying him hellward, and Satan determined not to let him go. Ah! he cannot reach to that which alone will avail to open God's door. Like a poor shipwrecked sailor clinging to a rock, the greedy waves lashing over him, and the tide rising which will surely sweep him away. No boat near, no floating spar, no effort availing, sure destruction coming. Ah! it is ever so with awakened sinners; they will strive, all their instinct for life aroused, but all is utterly vain. They cannot blot out their guilt before God, they cannot rise to purity and perfectness of heart and life. Strive as they may, there is their guilt and there their continued sin.

### III.—HOW SHE AT LAST OBTAINED ENTRANCE.

When she found all her personal efforts vain, she gave up striving longer, but looked out for some one to do for her what she could not do for herself.

She saw no difficulty here; she did not philosophize about it; she was too simple to have any difficulty. "Why," she thought, "I cannot ring the bell, but if I can get some one to ring it, it will be all the same." And when the bell was rung, with what quiet confidence she waited; not a doubt did she entertain. She took her place to enter into the results of another's doing, perfectly assured that the door would be opened to her, even as if she had rung the bell herself.

Now you must see that all this was the pure and simple faith of a child. As long as she strove to ring the bell herself to get the door opened she trusted in her own works; all her efforts vain, she got another to help her, and looked to his works. And the only part she acted was to cease from personal efforts and to *look out* for help, which when she had gotten she trusted in with assured confidence that her object would be gained, which it was. Now this brings out the whole matter before us in a clear and striking manner. Every awakened sinner seeks at first a self-salvation; he has no notion of salvation in any other way but by his own doing. He does not see that it is really beyond his power,



but sets vigorously to work ; yet the more he strives the more he sees how futile all his efforts are, all is vain ; he only gets worse and worse.

The only question which remains is, is there no help from without ? The child looked without for help. The poor sailor, seeing his perilous situation upon the rock, shouts for help and takes his garment and waves it in the hope that it will catch the eye of some who pass, and that they will come to his rescue. Yes, the sinner also looks out, and ceases from all his own works. But is all hope gone ? is there nothing for him but despair ? No. It is here where the excellency of the gospel of Jesus lies. It reveals One who has come to befriend the sinner, One who will do for the sinner what he cannot do for himself—all that he needs in order to be accepted into God's love and all the joyous privileges of his family. All is far above the sinner's power, but not above Christ's power. He can blot out his guilt and wash it away with his own blood. He can furnish the sinner with a righteousness which the law of God will accept. He can renew his heart and make it right towards God. Christ his propitiation, Christ his righteousness, Christ his

sanctification, he has all he needs to ensure God's favour now and heaven hereafter.

Ah ! this is what the gospel presents. It is God's way of saving men. They cannot save themselves ; they have destroyed themselves, but in Christ is their help. And what is there in this either dark or hard to be understood, what opposed to reason ? It is wondrous love and grace on God's part, which never could have been expected ; but it is neither abstruse nor absurd. The child certainly saw no difficulty, no absurdity, in trusting in what she had got another to do for her. The poor man in debt, pressed by sore want and distress, rejoices when a rich man undertakes to pay his debts and supply all his need, and sees nothing hard to understand in it, nothing foolish in his rejoicing in it. With what joy a shipwrecked sailor sees a life-boat coming to his rescue, and how he waves them on, and how gladly he allows himself to be taken on board ! Ah ! all this is blessed, and philosophical enough too, for that part of it ; and why, then, should not salvation by Jesus be hailed as the highest, best, and surest of all deliverances ?

Let us, my dear friends, rise to the grand tidings

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the gospel brings, and ceasing longer to strive vainly to be our own saviours, let us ask the Lord Jesus to be all we need for us, and let us lean upon his doing and dying, knowing that thus God's door shall be opened to us and we received with a happy welcome.

“Thy works, not mine, O Christ,

Speak gladness to this heart :

They tell me all is done,

They bid my fear depart.

To whom, save Thee, who canst alone

For sin atone, Lord, shall I flee ?”



## **VII.**

### **THE FIRE-KINDLING OF THE UNGODLY.**



ISAIAH I. 11.

"Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."

THERE are two great classes in mankind. There are those who put their trust in the Lord, and those who blindly and perversely turn away from Him, and trust in efforts of their own. It was man's sin at first that he aspired to be a god, independent of his Maker, if not actually his equal; and ever since the "head and front of man's offending" lies in his cherishing an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, in opposition to the most gracious discovery of his love and promises of good. This course can only, indeed, be pursued with infinite effort; and hence the whole life of those who know not the Lord is a continuous struggle to maintain themselves in a state of isolation from Him.

Now, we have these two great classes brought strikingly before us in this text, and in the verse preceding. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." What can be more blessed than this command of Heaven? What could bring such assured peace in such a dark hour as this trusting in, and staying upon the name of the Lord? We should think that, in a world of trial like ours, it would only require to be known that Jehovah, the Lord over all, invited all the children of men to trust in Him amid all their sorrows, to draw every heart in joyous, grateful confidence to Him; and yet the very reverse of all this is found. A small company, indeed, are found taking refuge in the Lord, and glorying in his name; but the great mass turn a deaf ear to all his calls, and seek, as best they may, to face the trials of time, and meet the deep, urgent wants of their pained and unsatisfied hearts.

Now, it is this great class of despisers who are brought before us here, the men who have no faith in God, and who dislike to receive benefits from his



hands; and you will mark that they are presented here in their most favourable aspect, as wondrously successful, their outward features even competing favourably with that of God's people. While they are walking in darkness, and have no light—it may be, shedding many tears, these are full of light and gladness.

It is of great moment, however, that we examine their state most carefully. It is the ruin of our souls to be caught by the seeing of the eye, and by the hearing of the ear. Is all this seeming prosperity and joy real? How will it end? Will this light serve in the dark valley? Why should we run, even though thousands are doing so, after that which is false, and which will go out in darkness when the night cometh? All these momentous questions are met in our text. The true state of the despisers of the Lord is laid bare. Here is the best that can be said for them. Here is their sad end. The Lord help us to hear and understand.

#### I.—THE FIRE-KINDLING.

“Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks.”

You remember that incident in the life of the Apostle Paul, when he and others were shipwrecked on the rocky island of Melita, and the barbarous people kindled a fire because of the rain and the cold. It is ever one of the first efforts of those who are cast ashore to kindle a fire. Warmth is an absolute necessity of human life. Town missionaries tell us, from their experiences, that as many die every winter from want of fire as from want of food.

There is something striking in the figure used here; they kindle a fire, and compass themselves about with sparks. They are in a state of spiritual darkness, cast away from God, and miserable, and their souls crave light and joy. They cannot live in this state; and they strive, therefore, to remedy the evils under which they lie. They kindle a fire, and compass themselves about with sparks.

You perceive the great idea involved here is, that they seek a remedy for the evils of their position by efforts of their own, in conjunction with the helps around them. It is just what the Lord accuses Israel of doing in the old time; they forsook Him, the fountain of living waters, and hewed to

themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which could hold no water. This fire-kindling is just carnal, ungodly man's effort to do without God. He is fully bent upon this ungodly course; he compasses himself about with sparks. He shuts out all thoughts of God, and surrounds himself with things of self and the world.

It was this which King Saul did when cast off by God in his backsliding: he went and inquired of the witch of Endor. It was this which King Asa did when diseased grievously in his feet: he sought not the Lord, but to physicians. It was this also which King Ahaz did when he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus.

Go through the whole history of God's people, and you will find that this was their great sin. Look at their making the golden calf in the wilderness and worshipping it, and their grievous declension in turning away from the living God to idols, which could neither see nor hear, and in seeking help from man in the day of trouble, forgetting that the Lord was their rock.

It is still the great characteristic of unbelieving men. They have turned away from the Lord in the

enmity of their hearts, and they solace themselves with things of the earth. What is the worldling doing but kindling a fire, and compassing himself about with sparks? Mark how they dishonour God in all this. It is not only saying, "We will not return to the Lord," but openly showing that they can do without Him. They kindle a fire, and have all the light and heat, all the satisfaction and joy they need. Hence they say, "Why should we return to the Lord? Who is He that we should serve Him? What shall it profit us if we pray unto Him?"

But you may trace this same *fire-kindling* in much higher manifestations than in those of the openly worldly and unbelieving. What is that trusting in fancied self-righteousness, and the pacifying of conscience with vows, and amendments, and charities, but a kindling of a fire to meet the cravings of an uneasy spirit? As Matthew Henry says, "They refresh and please themselves with a conceit of their own merit and sufficiency, and warm themselves with that. It is both light and meat to them." It is, in short, a making a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell—a seeking for safety in a mere refuge of lies.

II.—THE ENJOYMENT OF THE FIRE.

“Walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled.”

This is just what they are doing. They have lighted a fire that they may enjoy it, and they are not a little pleased with their success. It is very light and flaring. These very sparks exhilarate their spirits. They feel quite happy. The outer darkness is shut out, and they are joyous.

There is no question but the men of the world have a measure of happiness while they are prosperous in their way, and not intruded upon. Left to themselves, they walk in the light of their fire and the sparks which they have kindled. Give them their swing of pleasure undisturbed, and who can say that they have not a joy of their own? Is there no pleasure, think you, to the drunkard in his wild revel? Let the mad shouts and the uproarious songs of the tavern answer. Surely, there must be a pleasing excitement in the dance, which keeps a company engaged in it a whole night. Has not the man whose heart is set upon gold a measure of joy when he has made a successful venture? Does he

amass riches speedily, and is he not counted "fortunate," and regarded with envious eyes? Yes, let them have their fire and their sparks undisturbed, and for a time they are happy.

And yet it is a poor joy. There are few sadder sights in this world than the wild mirth of the slave. Ah! this dancing and song only make him forget that he is a slave still. This pleasure of the wicked is sadder far than all sorrow. It blinds them to their real state of thralldom and misery. It is the joy of rebellion also, the evil heart's protest against God; and a miserable joy it is at best, but a thing of man and the world. That is its range. How poor its bounds! Never rising to God, or the pure region of the spiritual and the holy.

And, yet more, it is a pleasure which is intruded sadly upon. Many an evil blast of drenching rain puts out this fire; and where are the light and the sparks then? Yes, at best it is a poor joy which a man finds in the world without God, and it is a joy which many a trial of earth extinguishes. It is a stolen pleasure, which they may be deprived of at any moment. It is a despoil done to God, and He will blast it in all its fruits. Then comes

III.—THE END.

“Walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled.”

Do this if you will. Refuse to hear the voice of warning and entreaty. Make your hearts stout against God. Walk in this light of yours, enjoy it as you may ; but know that “this ye shall have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.” It is a similar word to that, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.” Ah ! but what then ? “But know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”

There is an interesting scene in the life of John Knox. After one of his memorable interviews with Queen Mary, he was ordered into an adjoining room. There, as he sat, he met with some of the Court ladies in their richest dress. “O, fair ladies,” said the Reformer, “how pleasing were this life of yours if it should ever abide, and then, in the end, that ye might pass to heaven with all this gay gear !”

Ah ! this light which the wicked kindle shall not ever abide. Indeed, it is short lived. What a brief existence have these sparks ! They flare up the one moment—the next they have gone out in darkness.

And what is the end of this course ? That is the great question. It is not, is there pleasure to be found in the way ? But, what is the end of it ? This is the end of all the ways of the ungodly : “This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.”

Every one awaits the divine award. All shall receive something at the hand of God. Every one shall receive according to the deeds done in his body, whether they be good or evil. No one can dispute the justness and perfect rightness of this.

Well, what shall they receive who turn their backs upon God, and will none of Him, and who despise his salvation, and make light of his invitations and grace ? “They shall lie down in sorrow.” Bildad told Job this long before, “Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare.”



God will not honour these ways of the wicked, these godless efforts of theirs by which they do Him such despite. How can the end be otherwise than sorrowful, when the holy and just God reigneth supreme? If there be judgment at all, surely it must fall terribly on the heads of those who, in the forwardness of their hearts, go astray from God, in opposition alike to his holy law, and to the sweet and gracious calls of his gospel.

*"They shall lie down in sorrow."* Alas! this is the end. The night will come. Pale Death will put out their fire for ever, and seize them as his victims, and carry them away to his "own place." They would not have God's favour, and now they must sink down under his eternal frown. They would not have the love of the Lamb, and now they must endure his wrath. And this is the end of all their fires and sparks, their carousings and merriments, their worldly honours and joys! "This world's May flowers," as Samuel Rutherford says, "its withering riches and honour gone away as smoke." And nothing left but sorrow—sorrow at God's hand, pressed under its infinite weight for

evermore! "A sad bed," says Archbishop Leighton "that they must go to, after they have wearied themselves all the day in a chase of vanity. Nothing left them but the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched. Thus saith the Lord "Cursed be the man that maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." "Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

Let us consider this solemn matter, and lay to heart this great question. To which class do we belong? Am I one of those with whom God is all as their hope? or one of those by whom God is quite disregarded, and with whom self and the creature are all? We must belong to one or other, and we must know which. The features characterizing each are so marked, and so diverse, that no man need remain in doubt as to his course. Are you striving to meet the wants of your soul by efforts of your own, apart from God? or, have you gladly and humbly submitted yourself to be saved by Christ alone? If the former, however much you may be countenanced by thousands, and however broad the road may be in which you walk, know this, that the

joy you find there is false, your peace a mere delusion, your hopes utterly vain. Pursue this course if you will; but remember, that this you shall have at God's hand, you will at last "*lie down in sorrow!*"



## **VIII.**

**HOW ALL MAY BECOME RICH.**



I WAS much struck some years ago, in the time of the cotton famine, by an incident which came under my notice. A quantity of flour had been kindly sent from America to help the distressed Lancashire operatives. I was requested, along with the other ministers of the town, to give in the names of those in need. In order to ascertain speedily who were in want, I intimated from the pulpit that I would meet with those who desired help next evening. To my surprise, this simple announcement had such effect, that our school-room was crowded as I had never seen it before, with needy ones, all desirous of bounty; and yet it was but a few pounds of flour at most that each could get.

This incident at the time made a deep impression on my mind, and stirred much thought. The great question of *man's wants*, and how they are to be met, was much considered by me. No question can

be more appropriate, indeed, at any time ; but it is specially seasonable in times of distress. What I propose to consider now is : *How all may become rich* ; which underlies the great question, how we may secure a certain and abundant supply for all our need.

The craving for *riches* is common to all men. There is not a feature in our humanity that is more universal. It marks our fallen state. Cast away from God by sin, we are necessarily destitute. The pressure of want, or the dread of it, impels us to seek riches to insure us against it.

This is the great idea implied : the dread of *want*. And it is the best form in which it can be put. Poverty comes in like an armed man, and with thousands the continual struggle with it constitutes the great battle of life ; from the beginning to the close it is one long fight for bread. What sore distress and consuming care and toils we find for the barest necessities of life, food and clothing ! This leads us to value riches more than almost anything besides, and, above all, to strive and fight for it, as if the one great object of life were to secure a quantity of gold. Should we be successful in our



efforts, we would fancy ourselves truly fortunate and happy; and we follow those with gaping mouths and envious eyes who are the favoured runners in this race.

We all know how true this is. We have felt it a thousand times. Yet there are two things of great moment to consider :—

First. That *it is very hard to get riches*. Gold is to be had only with infinite effort, pains, perseverance, sharpness, and care, only by a kind of genius for making money, and keeping it when made; and even with all this, in order to be successful, in a great degree, we certainly need to have what the world calls good luck, fortunate chances, windfalls. There are many *blanks* in this lottery. Two Australian diggers may be taken as types of the whole. They are equal in every sense. They dig but a few yards apart; but they are wide as the poles asunder in their fortune. One from the first day is successful, and he soon amasses thousands; the other cannot make a tolerable day's wage, and is glad to beg his way back to Melbourne, to break stones on the highway. Yes, riches are hard to get. Thousands, even, go to their graves with not enough to bury

them, chased by poverty and misery, as so many bloodhounds, into the very jaws of death !

Second. *Riches when got do not make a man truly rich.*

Solomon said truly, "There is that maketh himself rich; and yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." This sounds strange, and seems a contradiction in terms, saying and unsaying. Why, the word riches, as used by the world, is a misnomer, a delusion, a mockery, and a snare. It is one of the devil's deceits. Riches, when got, fail to meet man's wants; his necessities are far beyond their power to reach; they only touch the borders of the field of his requirements, meeting his mere outer demands. If he has no more, he is poor still amid all his riches. They fail to satisfy his cravings, and the aching void of the pained, hungry heart cries still, "Give, give." Sorrows come in upon him, the tide rising higher and higher, deep calling unto deep; paralysing sickness comes, and his dearest ones are snatched away, and the heart is torn and sad, and the home, which was so gladsome, is darkened with the shadows of death. All his wealth is vain; his

gold, houses, lands, found to be miserable comforters. How truly does an old Puritan divine \* say, "A man diseased in his body can have little joy of his wealth, be it ever so much. A golden crown cannot cure the headache, nor a velvet slipper give ease from the gout, nor a purple robe fray away a burning fever. A sick man is alike sick wherever you lay him—on a bed of gold, or on a pad of straw, with a silk quilt, or a sorry rag on him; so, no more can riches, gold and silver, land and livings, minister unto him much joy—yea, or any true or sound joy at all, where the mind is distracted and discontented."

Riches also are often a *snare*, and aggravate the evils under which he labours. They cannot save the soul, but draw it away from God, who can save. John Newton, coming out of his church one day, was met by a lady, who told him she had drawn a large prize in a lottery, and said she was sure he would congratulate her. "Madam," said he, "as for a friend under temptation I will endeavour to pray for you."

And even unsatisfying and dangerous as they are, to

\* Gataker.

crown all, *they cannot be kept*. Let a man cling to his riches as he may, let him daily tell his gold, and sleep with his bags under his pillow, there is a time coming when they must part. God will come, and say, "Thou fool ! this night thy soul shall be required of thee, and whose shall all the riches be which thou hast provided ?" "Open the rich man's grave, and see what is there : you may see the miser's bones, but not his riches."\* "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not ? for riches certainly make themselves wings : they fly away."

No, riches of earth, which men so dote upon, and are at such pains to obtain, cannot truly make a man rich. Let us strive to define a *truly rich man*. He only is rich who has that which will infallibly supply all his future need, and which will carry him through life with joy, and cheer and sustain him in the trying hour of death, and open to him the doors of everlasting blessedness and glory in heaven. Ah ! this, this is what makes a rich man a truly fortunate man—a man provided for both time and eternity.

But *where* is this to be had ? In *what* does it

\* Watson.

consist? May we hope to *attain* to it? We have determined that which is *false*—what is the *true*? We have only been digging down, and turning the rubbish out of the way, and the house has yet to be built. We are not left to ask in vain. In God's blessed book, which is so much despised, the question is settled: both what will enrich, and how it may be had.

I.—WHAT WILL MAKE A MAN TRULY RICH?

Turn to Proverbs x. 22: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." Here it is, then. We have it on the word of God, who is true and faithful, "*The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich.*"

This is most absolute and certain. Let a man be never so poor in the world's goods, if he have the blessing of the Lord he is rich. Let a man be never so rich in the world's goods, if he have not the blessing of the Lord then he is poor.

Why, just consider what the blessing of the Lord is. Let your mind think of the *Lord*, Jehovah, the maker and upholder of all, Lord over all, the source of all life, and power, and joy. He who is

the Almighty, who hath all the resources of the universe, all gold and silver, and health and strength, under his control and at his disposal.

Then think of the *blessing* of the Lord. Why, the blessing of the Lord is this Mighty One coming in love to us to supply all our need, and to deliver us from all our distresses, to give us strength for our day, joy in the times of sorrow, to uphold amid earth's trials, to fill the mind with a blessed assurance of his love, and, at last, to carry us through the swellings of Jordan and all the pains of death, and to take us to his own house, that He may bless us evermore.

Yes, here are *true riches*, full, appropriate, satisfying, abiding, and eternal. The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich. How can it be otherwise? It is the Lord on our side ordering all for us in love, keeping us, providing for us. It is the Almighty who is doing all this—He, who by no possibility can be baffled or hindered in his works of love. This is to be rich indeed. They who are thus blessed can lack no good thing. He will supply all their need according to his fulness in glory. He will keep them in perfect peace; and,

therefore, they may cast their care upon Him, for He careth for them. They may dismiss every fear, knowing that the Lord is on their side, and will never leave nor forsake them. "Such as are blessed of Him shall inherit the earth." "I cannot be poor," said Bernard, "so long as God is rich ; for all his riches are mine."

II.—HOW THAT WHICH WILL MAKE A MAN RICH  
MAY BE HAD.

Here is truly that which will meet all our wants, and infallibly enrich us. May we have it? Is it free to us? How may we enjoy it? Great questions these. Well, turn to Rev. iii. 18, for answer : "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich."

The speaker is the *Lord Jesus*, who is dealing with those who foolishly thought that they were rich, though they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and He counsels them to *buy of Him*. He proclaims his market, and calls us to buy, without money and without price—a rare way, surely, and most suitable for us. He gives freely to all who are willing to receive.

Well, what does He sell so freely? "*Gold tried in the fire*"—true gold, not counterfeit gold, but that which will truly enrich.

What does He mean by this? Why, that if we would be truly enriched, if we would enjoy the blessing of God that maketh rich, we must come and buy from Him. He calls poor, needy ones to Him. He will meet all our wants, by filling us with the love and favour of God. He will give us a portion better than earth can afford, by making us sons and daughters of the Almighty. He calls us all to Him without exception. Whoever we are, and whatever our wants may be, however destitute, or miserable, or worthless, He calls us to come to Him.

In Jesus we shall find an abundant supply for the body and for the soul, for time and eternity; we shall be accepted in Him, beloved by the Father, who will forgive us freely, and lavish upon us his love, and covenant to be on our side to guide and guard us, and to supply all our wants, and to make all work for our good, and to lead us at last to his home above.

Ah! here then is the enriching blessing, and here



is the way of obtaining it, and all so free, that we are called to enter at once upon it as our glorious portion and inheritance.

Let us be wise, then, and turn from the broken cisterns of the world to this fountain of living waters. Here is the true supply for all our need, freely proclaimed in all its glorious abundance to us :—

“Turn thee, then, to that faithful Friend  
Who loves his own—loves to the end ;  
In want or woe forsakes them never,  
Sustains them now—enthrones for ever ! ”\*

But some one may be ready to say, “ Why, this is all *moonshine*. I am poor enough, and when I read the title, ‘ How all may become rich,’ I said, ‘ That is the very thing for me, I am as poor a fellow as ever was, and I shall hear how I may become rich ;’ but, instead of telling me some way of getting wealth, I am told about the blessing of God, and coming to Christ, which is all stuff. It is hard cash I want, not mere words, and things I do not understand or care a farthing about.”

Well, this is what many say ; and yet it is not

\* A. Bethune.

moonshine, or mere words, which nobody can understand. I will show you that the blessing of the Lord does truly do a man good, and supplies his need, and makes him a good and happy man, even in this life, by simply giving you two pictures which you may find in every town of the kingdom.

I shall lead you to the houses of two brothers. Let us go to one. What do we find? Want staring us in the face, wretchedness, and dirt, and squalor. There is scarce a seat for you, save an old rush-bottomed one, sadly the worse for wear, with a large gaping hole in the bottom, and all the back spars gone. You find the wife a wretched slattern, ill-fed, unwashed, heartless, hopeless, all light gone from her sunken eyes, and the colour from her cheeks; and there is her husband, slouching on a stool by the fire, dirtier still than his wife, his hair uncombed, his eyes wild, his coat in holes, and his senses drowned in drink.

We have seen enough here, we need not stay to mark the children. Let us go.

Now for the other brother's house. There we meet with a bright cheery welcome. All is the

very pattern of cleanliness, and the furniture is good, not to speak of what they have got in the parlour. The fire is bright, and the fender and fire-irons shining as if made of silver; and there is the wife, tidy and well clad, a very treasure for any working man; and there is he, also, after his day's work, sitting, washed, at his own fireside, enjoying a quiet, happy evening with his wife and children. You look around, everything tells you that there is no want there, and should you question him, he could tell you that he is in some good club, and that he has a round sum laid up in the savings-bank.

What two household scenes can well differ more than these? And yet they are the homes of two brothers, born of the same parents, and reared under the same influences, working in the same mill, and able to earn the same wages. What maketh them so to differ? Why, this, and this alone, which some sneer at, and call "moonshine"—it is the *blessing of the Lord* that hath made all the difference. Time was when both brothers were alike, both given to drink, both in misery. But the one, by something like chance, was led with his wife one day to

hear about Jesus and salvation, and the love of God, and they were strangely arrested, and they said, This is the very thing for us," and they sought Jesus, and found the blessing of the Lord, and from that time all began to alter with them. They saw things differently, and lived a new life, and found how happy a thing it is to enjoy the Lord's love. Their worldly circumstances improved, and they got out of debt, and they find that they have plenty now, and can also extend a helping hand to their poor miserable brother in his want and wretchedness. Ah! it was the blessing of the Lord that did it all, for it truly maketh rich.

I give you one picture more. I find it in an excellent little work, "Household Rhymes for Children," published lately by Jarrold and Sons, of London. It is entitled "Faith in God," and is the story of a widow and her four children. "The oldest was but six years old, a gentle, modest lad." Nobly she toiled for bread for her little ones.

The writer tells us, that one day, when the snow was falling fast, he determined to go and see how the children were. When he entered the cheerless home, he found the eldest child upon his knees.

" I paused to listen to the boy :  
He never raised his head,  
But still went on, and said, ' Give us  
This day our daily bread.'

" I waited till the child was done,  
Still listening as he prayed ;  
And when he rose I asked him why  
That prayer he then had said.

" ' Why, sir,' said he, ' this morning, when  
My mother went away,  
She wept, because she said she had  
No bread for us to-day.

" ' She said we children now must starve,  
Our father being dead ;  
And then I told her not to cry,  
For I could get some bread.

" ' Our Father, sir, the prayer begins,  
Which made me think that He,  
As we had no kind father here,  
Would our kind Father be.

" ' And then you know, sir, that the prayer  
Asks God for bread each day ;  
So in the corner, sir, I went,  
And that's what made me pray.'

" I quickly left that wretched room,  
And went with fleeting feet ;  
And very soon was back again  
With food enough to eat.

•

“ ‘I *thought* God heard me,’ said the boy.  
I answered with a nod ;  
I could not speak, but much I thought  
Of that boy’s faith in God.”

Yes, here is the true mine of wealth—the blessing of the Lord. O, despise it not. Believe in his assurances. Come and cast all your care upon Him, and daily seek his blessing, and you, also, from your experience, will be able to say, “Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God,” so that you may boldly say, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear.”

“Blest is my lot, whate’er befall :  
What can disturb me, what appal,  
Whilst as my Rock, my Strength, my All,  
Saviour, I cling to Thee!”

IX.

**BANK NOTES AND BILLS.**





I SUPPOSE you know what Bank Notes and Bills are, though perhaps you may have seldom to do with the one or the other. But like a great many other plain things, it is worth while to consider what they really are. The plainest and most every-day things are often least known.

Well, here is a note issued by the Bank of England. Let us hear what it says. It is headed "Bank of England." It tells us at the first where it comes from. Then it goes on to say : "I promise to pay the Bearer on demand the sum of Five Pounds here or in London. 1861, Aug. 16. Newcastle-on-Tyne, 16 Aug., 1861. For the Governor and Company of the Bank, W. P. Gattie."

Now, the first thing that strikes one here is that this note is just a written promise, neither more nor less. This promise is made by W. P. Gattie, for the Governor and Company of the Bank of England.

The sum he promises is £5. The party he promises it to is the bearer. When and where it is payable is on demand at Newcastle-on-Tyne or in London. This is the whole: it is a piece of paper having all this printed upon it, and signed by W. P. Gattie.

A bill, or a promissory note, does not differ materially from a bank note. It is just a written promise, too, signed by some one or more, in which a certain sum is promised to some party, either on demand, or after a given period of time.

Now, no doubt many who find it hard to meet all the demands for food and raiment for themselves and their families, would be very thankful to have the gift of a number of these notes. Had I issued a placard that instead of merely talking about bank notes, I intended to make a present of one to every comer, what a crowd of needy ones would have come ! But because I am only going to talk about them, the crowd cry, " Oh, bother ! it is all gammon."

And yet, strange as it may sound to you, I might have issued an advertisement, saying in very truth that I would give away notes of the greatest value to all who would accept them. And I am in reality prepared to do so now to you.

You wonder at this, and may think that I am only playing with you ; but it is not so. It is a great and solemn fact, that if you are willing you may carry away with you many great and exceedingly precious notes as your own for ever.

Well, now, what are these notes, and where are they ? Well, bear in mind what we found a bank note to be. It is just a written promise, with the signature of the promiser. Well, the notes you may have freely are God's. They are the written promises which He has sent into the world, the notes He has put in circulation, in which He engages to make certain payments and gifts of the highest and best kind. They are God's Bible notes, as truly notes as the others, only far more valuable. It is curious and most significant that a great part of the Bible is made up of them. Whatever He is speaking about, He never proceeds far without giving some new promise or note. You may gather them in every page in Scripture, and they are so very plenteous and peculiar that all may have them, and one note be made use of and get paid by a thousand different people at the same time.

Now, I want to speak to you about God's Bible

notes. I cannot tell you of a hundredth part of them, and shall merely direct you to two facts in reference to them, and shall then consider their great features. Turn to 2 Peter i. 4. There we are told that “*God hath given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.*” There is the very thing—great and precious promises. And if we turn to 2 Cor. i. 20, we find that “*all the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus.*” That is, they are all signed and made sure by Him. Let us go forward and examine these, just as we did the Bank of England note. Well, then—

#### I.—WHOSE PROMISES ARE THEY?

This is a question of great moment. It all depends upon this whether the note is of any value. We found at the very head of the note we examined that it was a Bank of England note. The Governor and Company thereof were the promisers. It being a great and wealthy company, and perfectly able to make good their promise, their note is worth £5. They are bound for that amount, and will pay it. But suppose it were a note belonging to some bankrupt or fictitious bank, such as that of the “Bank

of Elegance," then it would be worthless. You might have a thousand of them, and have only so much waste paper. Everything depends upon the promiser. Has he truly bound himself, and is he able to make good his promise? In other words, can he cash his notes?

Well, the *Promiser here is God* over all, our Maker, Preserver, and Redeemer. These are his notes; they are headed, "Thus saith the Lord," "I promise." They are signed by himself. He has made a solemn oath that He will perform, and make them all good. He has sent them in and by his Son Jesus. They are yea and amen in Him. Altogether sure, made sure by his death and resurrection. The best bank on earth may fail. There is no absolute certainty in man's promises; losses may fall upon him, and utterly ruin him. But God's word of promise never can fail; He is the Almighty, and He is faithful to his own word. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not a jot or tittle of his word shall pass till all be fulfilled. He will never allow his faithfulness to fail, but will make good the word that has gone out of his mouth. Old Thomas Brooks has a very good remark in regard

to this: "I had rather," said Plutarch, "that men should say there was never any such person in the world as Plutarch, than that they should say Plutarch is unfaithful. A man were better say there is no God, than say that God is unfaithful; a noble spirit can better bear any charge than that of being unfaithful, and so can a faithful God." God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

## II.—FOR WHAT AMOUNT ARE THESE PROMISES?

We ask, what is the amount of the bank note? Is it for £5, or £50, or what? We know that it is not worth more than the sum named. Well, what is *the* amount of God's promises? We have seen them styled "exceeding great and precious." Everything is there that we need—all that appertains to life and godliness. They are most comprehensive. A bank note may be given us for £5 when nothing short of £50 would meet our necessity. But God measures his notes by our wants. All riches are there. "We might rob the world of all her jewels,

and justly hang them on the ear of the promise of God. There are more riches and treasures to be had in one promise than all the gold and silver of earth's mines."

There are promises of pardon, a new heart, restoration to God's loving fellowship, guidance, keeping, strength, food and raiment, help, deliverance, and comfort, all through life, and support in the dark valley, and glory evermore—all in the promises. "They are rivulets that sweetly flow out," as Ralph Erskine says, "and run forth from the ocean to the city of God, to the house of the mourner, to the field of the withered and decayed, to the habitation of the hungry and thirsty, yea to the grave and dry bones, to make the dry land springs of water, and to make the wilderness blossom as the rose." "They are the granary of spiritual provision," as Gurnal says, "whereby our Joseph, our Lord Jesus, nourisheth and preserveth alive his brethren in the time of famine. They are a hive of sweetness, where the believing soul in the winter of affliction both lies warmly and lives plentifully on the stock of comfort there laid up. They are, in a word, the fair havens and safe roads into which the

tempted one puts his weather-beaten soul, where it lies secure till the heavens clear and the storms are over. When death itself approaches, faith on the promises carries the Christian's soul out of the garrison of the body, with colours flying and joy triumphing, to heaven, leaving only his body behind in the hands of death; and that with the assurance of its being gloriously raised in the resurrection morning."

### III.—TO WHOM ARE THEY PAYABLE?

The bank note is made payable to the *bearer*. Whoever possesses it has a right to demand gold for it. And yet it may be required of him, that he show how he came to be possessed of it. He may have stolen it, and if detected shall only find a prison.

What an important question, then, is this—to whom are God's promises payable? Who have a right to come to Him, that they may be made good to them? This is a great question, but not a difficult one. This one thing settles it, they are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. All who are welcome to Christ, then, are welcome to the promises of God. But as they are in Christ's hands, we get them, and



have a right to them by coming to Christ. The good news about Christ is just good news about these promises. "The gospel," says John Wesley, "is in truth but one great promise, from the beginning of it to the end." Every poor sinner, then, is called by Christ to come to Him, and be enriched with the promises of God. All shall be his if he flees to Jesus, and trusts in Him. "The promise of grace and salvation by Jesus Christ," says Trail, "is the rope and cord that God casts out to sinking sinners. It is equally in the offer of all in the gospel. Sinners perish under the gospel, not because there is no cord of salvation cast out to them, but because they either love the pit they are in, or cannot trust God's faithful promise of salvation by Christ for their delivery."

In truth, then, these promises of God are *payable to the bearer*—to all who, seeing their preciousness, long to be put in possession of their blessings, and come therefore to God, that they may enjoy them. This is their warrant, they are given to them—poor, unworthy, guilty sinners, as they are—in and by Christ Jesus. They are God's free gift to them, so unlike all bank promises, which are only given for a

consideration. You pay in gold, or houses, or lands, and you get in return notes, or bonds, or bills. Ah ! but God calls you as poor and wretched to Him, and He gives you all these precious promises as yours, in which you will find all true riches and joy. "The promises of God unto a faithful soul are instead of all assurances, bills, and bonds for his livelihood, maintenance, protection, assistance, deliverance, comfort, and everlasting happiness."

#### IV.—WHEN AND WHERE ARE THEY PAYABLE ?

"On demand," says this bank note, "here or in London." So runs this bank promise. When and where are God's notes payable ?

*When ?* In part now. If we come to God in the faith of his promises, and ask anything from Him, we shall receive a present supply, according to our need ; but the promise is never fully paid till we are introduced into the glory of God. Heaven is the promise fully performed. We receive a portion in hand, but the stock God keeps in his own hands. Eternity has to be provided for as well as time.

So also with regard to *Where* payable. Wherever we are, there God is near to bless. The believer's

bank follows him wherever he goes. His God, upon whose promised care he depends, is ever near to help in all straits and trials. "Suppose a wealthy man is travelling on the Continent. If his money falls short, he knows that he has a large sum in his banker's hands, which he can draw upon. So is it with God's people. Their treasure is in heaven, and God himself is their banker. When the barrel of meal and the cruise of oil fail, they can draw upon God anew by faith and prayer. The Holy Spirit will honour their bill at sight, and issue to them from time to time sufficient remittances to carry them to their journey's end." "Faith in God's promises," says Toplady, "may be compared to a bank note; full and felt possession of the blessings is like ready cash. The man who has bank notes to any given value looks upon himself as possessed of so much money, though in reality it is so much paper. Thus faith is satisfied, and rests with as great complacency in the promise of Jehovah as if it had all the blessings of grace and glory in hand. In faith's estimation, God's note is current coin."

Well, now, surely if God has issued promises

great and precious, and if He has graciously offered them to us by the hand of his Son Jesus, then let us, as we would be truly enriched and provided for in time and eternity, make them ours by accepting them. Let us treasure them up in our hearts as valuable, and believe that they are genuine, and thoroughly to be relied upon. Let us make use of God's promises. What is the use of a bank note if you don't believe in it, or pay it away? It is just a piece of paper, with which a man may light his pipe. God's promises must be accepted, treasured up, trusted and used, or they will be a dead letter to us, rising to condemn us terribly in the great day. All peace, and satisfaction, and happiness, flow from a right use of God's promises. He is the truly happy man whose portion lies there. They are a perennial fountain of refreshment to him; they make him rich toward God, and secure him in all the blessings of the covenant—all grace now, and glory hereafter.

"I believe the promises enough," said Dr. Watts when dying, "to venture an eternity on them. It is the plain promises of the gospel that are my support; and I bless God they are plain promises, and do not require much labour and pains to under-

stand them; for I can do nothing now but look into my Bible for some promise to support me, and live upon that."

Mr. Lawrence, a friend of Philip Henry's, when he was turned out of his church in the Nonconformist times for adherence to Christ, was asked how he meant to maintain his wife and ten children. He cheerfully replied, "They must live or the 6th of Matthew, 25th verse, 'Take no thought for your life,'" &c. He cast himself and family upon the covenant care of God, and He carried him through. Mr. Henry noted that "though many of the ejected ministers were brought low, had many children, were greatly persecuted, and their friends generally poor and unable to support them, yet he never knew nor heard of any Nonconformist minister in prison for debt."

Mr. Dod, one of the old Puritan divines, had his house at one time plundered of all he had. His wife was in great distress about it. "Wife," said he, "be not troubled; I have a *bond* yet to live upon." "What bond?" said she. "Why this bond in Hebrews xiii. 5: 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' Come, let us put this bond

into suit—let us go to prayer.” The next morning the neighbours sent him more than he had lost.

A Christian lady in Yorkshire, sitting down to breakfast one morning, was very forcibly impressed with the feeling that she should carry a loaf of bread to a poor man who lived about half-a-mile from her house, by the side of a common. Her husband wished her to delay, and send it by a servant, but she determined to take it at once herself.

As she approached the hut she heard the poor man praying thus: “O Lord, help me. Lord, Thou wilt help me; Thy promise cannot fail; and although my family have no bread to eat, and it is now a whole day since we had any, I know Thou wilt supply me, though Thou shouldst rain down manna from heaven!”

The lady could wait no longer, and, opening the door, said, “Yes; God has sent you relief. Take this loaf, and be encouraged to cast your care upon Him, who careth for you; and when you ever want a loaf of bread, come to my house.”

Yes; there are promises, great and precious, made to us by God. They are far surer than man’s, come from what bank they may, and far

more valuable. Take the very highest, conveying to us thousands of pounds—yet what are these to the extent and the blessedness of what God freely promises? All we need is promised there—all for the body and the soul, for time and eternity. Oh, take God's promises as they come to you, freely, by Christ's hand. They are his bonds; take them to you, and they will be yours. Plead them, and put them in suit, and live upon them. There you will find all you need throughout life, and also

“In that charter read with sparkling eyes  
Your title to a treasure in the skies.”

In the beautiful words of old Ralph Erskine, “Walk in that garden of the Scriptures, and pluck up the flowers of gospel promises, and put them in your bosom. Live by faith upon the promise, and be persuaded, whatever stands in the way, that God will do as He hath said. He will do so; for what He hath said He hath written, what He hath said He hath sealed, what He hath said He hath sworn, what He hath said He will never unsay. Therefore take hold of this word of grace, and hold Him at his word in life and death, saying, ‘Do as Thou hast said.’”

Like Martin Luther, take one of God's promises, and laying it down before Him, say, "Now, Lord, here is thy word, let it be made good to me."

"Yes! since God himself has said it,  
On the promise I rely;  
His good word demands my credit,  
What can unbelief reply?  
He is strong and can fulfil;  
He is truth and therefore will.

"As to all the doubts and questions  
Which my spirit often grieve,  
These are Satan's sly suggestions,  
And I need no answer give:  
He would fain destroy my hope,  
But the promise bears me up."\*

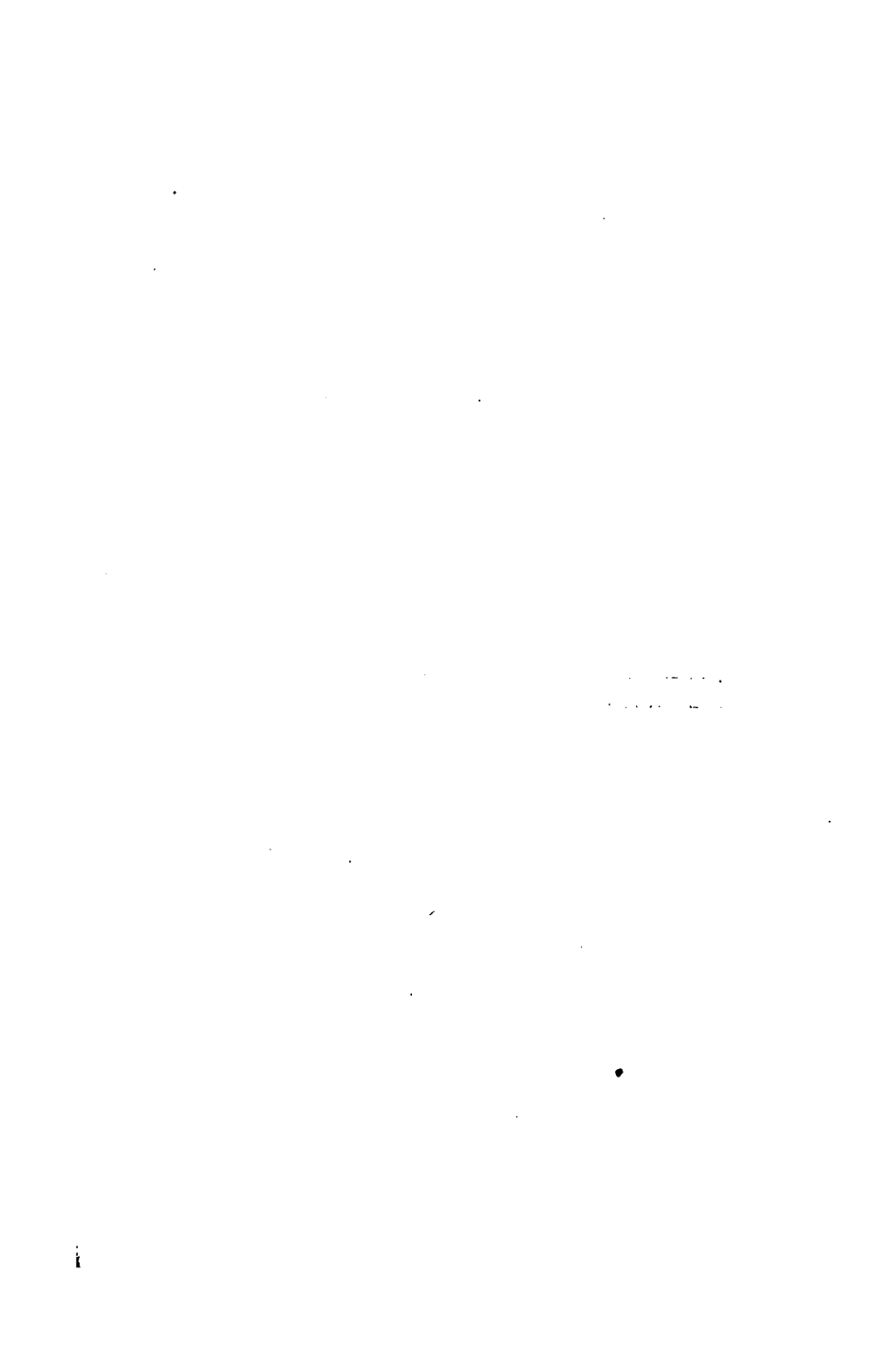
Now, may the Lord the Promiser, in his mercy, grant us grace to cleave to Him, as the Lord the Performer. Amen.

\* John Newton.



**X.**

**THE WRECK OF THE "ANGLO-SAXON" AND THE  
LESSONS IT TEACHES.**



LUKE xii. 40.

"Be ye therefore ready also."

WE can scarcely conceive a scene more affecting and impressive than is presented by an emigrant vessel setting out of port. How for months, it may be years before, it was looked forward to by the passengers as a stern necessity. Here all is come to a point at last. The die is cast, and now the result must be faced. The tender ties of country and friendship have been broken, sad farewells said, hands clasped for the last time. The gangway has been drawn up, and the rope cast loose, and the great ship is under way. How the passengers crowd along the bulwarks and silently watch their friends and the receding shore! But their dear faces blur and die out in the distance. Soon, alas! the shores of the dear old fatherland get dim and hazy, and sink away in clouds, and are seen no more! Now

there is nothing seen but the ocean, so strange to the hundreds who throng the deck, with its troubled waters and tumbling billows, striking so ominously against the brave ship as she ploughs her way so majestically along.

What varied characters we have huddled together here in this little world ! Young men, full of the ardour of youth, bent on pushing their fortunes in a country where there is greater scope than in this. There, young women full of tender fears, yet strangely drawn away, full of hope. There, stalwart men with their wives and children, and hoarded savings, determined to make a great venture in a new country, which welcomes the sons of labour, and more plentifully rewards their toil. There, also, not a few chased away by care and want, weak, timorous women, driven to face the perils of the ocean in the hope of finding bread for their children, without a weary heart-burning fight for it.

I doubt not that such a scene the *Anglo-Saxon* presented when she cleared out of Liverpool on the 16th of April, 1863, and a day or so later from Londonderry, with her three hundred and sixty passengers on board. Yet she was a trusty ship,

stronger than most, and had done good service in the Crimea, and had an experienced commander. There was everything to make them hopeful. In all there were four hundred and fifty souls on board. Though they may have left with sad hearts and eyes dimmed with tears, thus leaving home and country, yet those emigrants might cheer themselves with bright prospects, the spray and fresh breezes serving to enliven their spirits. So, Westward ho!

Thus they set out bound for Canada. The voyage was, like most in the spring-time, good on the whole; but they experienced strong gales. On the 25th, towards night, there was much ice and thick fogs. They slowed the engines, and after two hours they stopped. The fog began to clear on the morning of the 26th, and steam was put on again. As the day wore on it got quite clear, and they went at full speed with all sails set. Then they found that they were three hundred miles from Cape Race. How buoyant every heart must have been, now so near the end of their voyage! They were soon in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, out of the tossings of the Atlantic. Towards night the fog again thickened,

but the ship held on her course, no one having any fear of danger. Morning, 27th, the fog was very dense, and yet they went at half-speed. They now supposed that they were forty miles from Cape Race. On, on they went, dreaming of no danger, nearing the Cape, doubtless, but still believing it to be at least seventeen miles off.

Thus, alas! they went blindly on, when, shortly after eleven o'clock in the forenoon, the startling cry was heard, which chilled every heart, "Breakers on the starboard beam!" The engines were backed at full speed; but it was vain. The headway was so great that the ship went right onward, and struck her stem heavily on the rocks off Clam Cove, four miles north of Cape Race! Impaled thus on the rocks by the stem, her stern in deep water, she swung round and beat tremendously upon a rock. Then the water came pouring in and extinguished the fires. There was nothing for it but to let off the steam by the safety-valves and keep cool, and strive to save themselves. The bowsprit projected over the land, but the fog was so deep that they could scarcely see it. Thus with a cable and halser ashore, and a running-basket, they got the

women and children and thirty men saved. Three boats on the seaside of the ship were launched and carried away their cargoes. Hope began to brighten. If the ship continued but as she was for a short time, they would all be saved.

Alas! the respite was not long enough. She soon began to settle down, and tilted heavily towards the sea, pitching many into it. One boat also got foul of the rigging and was upset, and all were lost. She heeled over yet further, and two hours after striking, went down in deep water. The captain, who clung nobly to her to the last, went down with her. He rose again and attempted to get clear of the wreck, but got hemmed in, so that he was quite unable to save himself, and perished. Nearly two hundred and forty were believed to be lost, who, had they had but one hour more, would all have been saved. . Lost, when no danger was feared—lost, when they had passed through all the perils of the deep, and were so near their destination—lost, with two hours brief warning! So many, also, in hopeful youth, with life and the world all before them, and their minds full of visions of success, and manifold plans and specula-

tions ! Vastly different in many respects, I am reminded somehow forcibly of Cowper's lines on the loss of the *Royal George* at Spithead in 1782 :—

"Toll for the brave !  
     The brave that are no more !  
 All sunk beneath the wave,  
     Fast by their native shore !

"Eight hundred of the brave,  
     Whose courage well was tried,  
 Had made the vessel heel,  
     And laid her on her side.

"A land breeze shook the shrouds,  
     And she was overset ;  
 Down went the *Royal George*,  
     With all her crew complete."

"Toll for the brave !  
     Brave Kempenfelt is gone ;  
 His last sea-fight is fought ;  
     His work of glory done."

Ah ! yes, so may it be said of these who went down in this sad shipwreck. Their last fight with the trials of earth was fought, their work, noble or ignoble here, all done. All had thus suddenly and so sadly come to an end. For Captain Burgess, and the crew who perished, no more conflict with the wild ocean, her billows, or her breakers ! She has



mastered them at last, and hath taken them into her keeping, till that morn when the sea shall give up her dead. For those who fled from their own land, under the pressure of want, no more hard struggles with poverty. They have found relief from it, not by the fancied fortune of a new country, but by the cold hand of death ! Ah ! this may well make sad many a heart and home, and it undoubtedly will for many years to come. But our business is chiefly to consider well the great lessons it teaches. There is a danger of the moral effect evaporating in mere emotional feelings, whereas the outstanding lessons are most practical, and should teach us all to be wiser and better. Thoughtful minds will deduce many, but I shall only give you two, certainly among the greatest.

I.—WE SEE THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF BEING  
UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF AN INFALLIBLE  
LEADER IN THE GREAT VOYAGE OF LIFE.

Life is compared to a *journey*, and with great aptness too ; but it may as well be likened unto a *voyage*. The world we are called to pass through is, like the great deep, full of dangers and storms,

perilous days of fog and darkness, when no reckoning can be kept—great waves of trouble tossing, deep calling unto deep, evil currents, untoward winds, rocks, and breakers. Ah! how much depends upon our being under the conduct of a Leader who never can fail, but whose skill and power will meet every emergency! Whether Captain Burgess was really to blame is hard to say, yet how sad does the story of his officers tell! He knew not where he was, yet went on, and when the catastrophe came supposed they were seventeen miles out of danger, though they were running right upon destruction! Then, again, blame has been attached to the Government for not placing Daboll's fog-trumpets to warn off a dangerous coast in foggy weather. Who is to blame here we know not. It is the old story of the "Circumlocution Office," I suppose. The thing was not done, and, what with ignorance, culpable or not, on the part of the commander, and it may be also rashness, and want of danger-signals, the ship ran upon the rocks and perished, with her two hundred and forty souls. Ah! we need in the great voyage of life a Commander altogether sure, who is ever aware of all dangers to which we are

exposed, and who can carry us safely through all storms, trials, shoals, rocks, and hellward currents, and land us in safety at last in the glorious haven of heaven, where all storms will be over, all dangers past. Ah ! friends, there is such a glorious Commander for us. Jesus, the Son of God, O make Him yours, if He is not ; cling to Him, if He is. Trust Him wholly. Give Him the helm ; let Him order all as He will. He cannot fail ; He will bring all who are his into his own haven in the eternal rest.

II. — ABOVE ALL, WE SEE HOW INFINITELY IMPORTANT IT IS AT ALL TIMES TO BE PREPARED FOR DEATH.

These two hundred and forty did not think, as they talked and schemed about their future movements in Canada, that all was so nearly over with them, and death actually at the door. So sadly true is it that, whether on sea or land, we put away the thought of the visits of the great destroyer. We seem to think that the more it is out of mind the further it is off. We give way to deceits and fancies, and suppose all is right enough, and death

far out of our course of steering, while in a moment we are aroused by a tremendous crash upon the rocks which gird the sea of life. Then all anchors may be let go to steady the ship; but they drag, or the cable snaps. There is nothing for it, the ship must go. Cling to her as you may, she is sinking deeper and deeper. Oh these cold dark waters, how they rise about the heart! Oh, steady, steady, poor ship! The Lord have mercy, she is heeling over, right into the sea! She is down! and the sea gurgles and dashes fiercely against the rocks like a monster seeking a fresh prey!

Ah! how well it is to be prepared for this solemn time, come when it may! Our Lord's command is, "*Be ye therefore ready also.*" Everywhere we are exposed to death. Whether on sea or land, death dogs our steps, and we know not how suddenly we may be hurried away. All our experience declares how true this is. We could all give numberless instances. Every paper tells the same tale.

"Death rides on every passing breeze,  
He lurks in every flower;  
Each season has its own disease,  
Its peril every hour."\*

\* Heber.

The solemn call, then, is, *Be ready*. Think not of danger only at sea; there is danger upon land too. We know we must die one day. We may be on the eve of that solemn time, when nothing will avail to ward off the fatal blow. Oh, let us seek to be ready for death, come when it may. *Ready*, mark you, prepared at any moment. For what? Not merely to die—which readiness is common enough—but ready to *meet Christ*, whose coming must either be to doom us to eternal misery and despair, or to carry us to glory. Let us seek, then, to know Christ. Let us beseech his mercy, and trust in his blood that cleanseth from all sin. Let us touch the hem of his garment, and give ourselves as poor lost sinners to be redeemed by Him, and prepared for glory. Oh, then, let us, by all the value of our souls, by all the glory of heaven, by all the miseries of the place of woe, seek unto Jesus without delay, for now He calls us to Him to be saved, to look to Him and live.

“It is a fearful thing to die  
The death of a sinner’s agony—  
A prayerless heart—no voice to plead—  
Thick darkness, and no hand to lead;

To see beyond the open grave  
No star of hope—no arm to save—  
No ear for his despairing cry—  
It is a fearful thing to die.

"It is a blessed thing to die—  
To know no sin, no tear, no sigh ;  
To pass into a world of light,  
When faith itself is lost in sight ;  
To leave a world of pain and strife ,  
To find an entrance into life ;  
To see our Saviour eye to eye—  
It is a blessed thing to die."

## **XI.**

**LANTERN LESSONS IN THE WAY HEAVENWARD.**





PSALM cxix. 105.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

SOME ten winters ago, when the snow was lying deep upon the ground, my worthy old elder, William Brown, was dying. I had often to visit him, though with considerable difficulty sometimes, owing to the road being blocked up with snow; still, by striking into the field on the upper side, where it was not so deep, I was able to wade through. One night, after the road was cut, I went to see him; it was a dark, gloomy night, and it was with the greatest difficulty I found my way. After remaining some time with him, hearing his oft-repeated simple faith in Jesus, "I am just resting on Jesus, looking to Jesus—He is my all," and after commending him to the Lord, in whom he believed, I proposed to leave for home. Hearing that the night was very dark, he, with his usual thoughtful kind-

ness, insisted on my taking his lantern with me to show me the way. It was one he used himself in former times, when he was in service, coming home at nights from his master's. I gladly availed myself of the kind offer; and so very marked was the benefit of it, that it was full of lessons to me all the way home. I thought of David's experience, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." I felt every step how true his words were, and said I must some day tell the lessons which the lantern has taught me.

David tells us that the word of the Lord was a lamp and a light to him. Now, I was forcibly taught that night that there are three things the word does for us as a lamp and a light:—1. It guides us. 2. It guides us with safety. 3. It guides us with comfort. May the good Lord thus bless his word to us now.

#### I.—THIS LAMP AND LIGHT GUIDES US.

We all are travellers—life is a journey. From the day of our birth unto the day of our death we are travelling onwards to eternity. We should think much of that great journey; there is nothing in all the

world so important. If you were going to emigrate to Australia, how much you would think of it! You would count every morning as you rose how long it would be till you would have to sail. You have a far greater journey than that to take: you have to leave the world for ever—it may be very soon—to go into the eternal world, and to appear before God to be judged.

The great thing we have got to do, is to walk so as to please God all through life, and to reach heaven when we die. We shall die; but we shall never get to heaven above, and to Jesus, and the angels, and all the redeemed, if we do not walk in the *right way*.

Now, the great thing for us all is to find out the right way, and walk in it till death comes, and then we shall pass away to be for ever with the Lord, which is far better; but, if we do not walk in the right way, we shall not reach heaven when we die, but shall sink down among the lost in hell, and shall find ourselves undone for ever.

How important it is, then, for us, in setting out in life, to know the right way to heaven! There is only one way to heaven; but there are thousands of ways to hell. Our beloved Saviour said that

“strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life ;” but “wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction.” Very few ever find the one way—the multitude are found in the other.

But *what shall we do ?* We do not know the way of life, we are quite in darkness. I remember once hearing of a shepherd who had to go out to the hill in a deep snow-storm to look after his sheep ; a dark, drifty night set in, and his poor wife waited and waited for his coming home ; but the night passed away, and yet he had not come. When the morning light broke she went out to look for him, and there he was, a few yards from his own door, cold and dead ! He had wandered about in the darkness until he sank down and perished. I once heard of a young woman who nearly lost her life in a similar way, coming home from Northumberland, where she was in service, into Liddesdale. She knew the way well when she had light ; but when it got dark she lost herself, and after wandering until she was quite wearied, she was forced to lie down on the hill-side, and wait for the morning, When day came she found that she was close to her mother’s

house; but she did not know it when it was dark.

But we are not only in darkness, we are *out* of the way. Sin has carried us far away from God and the way heavenward. We are like foolish lost sheep, as David says, who have wandered from the good fold.

There is very much, also, that helps to keep us out of the right way. Were you standing very much perplexed about the way to some place to which you wanted to go, and were a great company to come, crying, "We are all going there, too—come along with us," you would run after them, never doubting but all was right; and yet they may all be deceiving you. Now, that is the way a great many are lost. A young man leaves his father's home, and goes out into the world, and perhaps the last words his mother says to him are, "Oh mind, my boy, to walk in the way of God, and seek to reach heaven at last!" Well, with a full heart, he determines to do so. But he has not been long away until he begins to feel very lonely, and he seeks companions, and they seem very fine fellows, and he thinks that all is right, and he goes along

with them, and they soon lead him quite out of the way of life, and, as Solomon says, his "feet go down to death, and his steps take hold on hell." Then there are the evil allurements of the world, its vain shows, and profits, and pleasures; and Satan, who comes with fair speeches and promises, would also lead us to destruction.

Well, what is to be done? Why, we must have *a lamp and light* to show us the right way. I remember that night, before I got the lantern, how hardly I could find my way, although I knew it quite well before, having gone along it hundreds of times. It was so dark, that I missed the opening leading into the house, and repeatedly came against the railing. But on returning with the lantern, all was plain—the light showed me my way; and when coming to the wood, opposite my house, instead of being forced to go round by the road, I was able to take the near way through it.

Ah! this is just what God's word does for us. It is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path. It guides us in the way of life. It is given for this very purpose. It shows us our lost state, how far we have wandered from God, how sad our

condition is, and that we shall surely perish unless we find the way of life. It shows us Jesus, God's Son, our Saviour, standing by us, and tells us that He has come to seek and save the lost, and it calls us to accept Him as our Saviour, and declares that He will take away all our iniquity, and heal our backslidings, and lead us joyfully to heaven. Whoso findeth Christ findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.

II.—THIS LAMP AND LIGHT GUIDES US WITH  
SAFETY.

Suppose you had to travel across a country in a dark night where there were many deep pits, or by a rocky shore, where there were high precipices, with the waves lashing at the bottom, how extremely dangerous it would be without a light. You would never know but the next step you would fall into one of these pits, or over a precipice. I remember, a few years ago, a gentleman having to pass through a field in England after dark. He did not know that there was an old coal-pit still open in it. Walking on, never fearing any danger, all at once he stepped into the pit. Very providentially, the old

chain with which they raised the buckets of coal was still hanging down it. As he fell he caught hold of the chain, and, though he could not save himself, he slid to the bottom, hanging on by the chain. This saved his life ; but he was very much bruised, and had all the flesh torn off the palms of his hands. He lay stunned at the bottom of the deep pit for two or three days. There he would have died from starvation, but a man happened to pass the mouth of the pit, and he heard him groan, and gave the alarm, and so he was rescued.

The lantern also saved me from danger. Coming along between the two walls of snow on the sides of the road, in the narrow cutting, I met a man on horseback. I knew not how I could have escaped being ridden over without a light, as I neither could have heard nor seen him. Then I met two carts. In both cases, with my light, I went on in safety. Ah ! thought I, as I passed them, how many dangers does the lamp of God's word save those from who walk under its light through the dark world ! What pitfalls, what temptations, what snares, and covert assaults of the wicked one, it keeps God's people from ! It not only shows them



the way heavenward, but it guards them against dangers by the way. It keeps them on the watch, like a soldier travelling through an enemy's country. It warns them that Satan, like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. It above all teaches them to go forward, not trusting in their own strength, but in the Lord God. Like Robert McCheyne, as they go forward their cry is—

“O grant me in Thy word to see  
A risen Saviour beckoning me.  
No evil then my heart shall fear,  
In the dark valley Thou art near!  
My trembling soul, and Thou, my God,  
Alone are there; Thy staff and rod  
Shall comfort me. O gentle Dove,  
How much Thy holy law I love!  
My lamp and light  
In the dark night.”

### III.—THIS LAMP AND LIGHT GUIDES US WITH COMFORT.

“Truly the light is sweet,” says Solomon, “and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.” Think of the joy that must fill the heart of a man who has been confined long in a dark dungeon, when he is set at liberty, and brought

forth again into the glorious light of day. O how wondrously beautiful the green fields, and the blue sky, and the flowers must appear to him !

Yes, there is something terribly sad in the state of a sinner walking on in darkness, getting farther and farther away from God, not knowing any moment but he may fall into hell ! But oh the joy of that man when the light of God's word shines in upon his darkness, and when Christ comes to him, as the angel did to Peter, when he lay bound in prison, between two soldiers, and makes his fetters fall from him, and leads him forth from prison into glorious freedom, and God's open day, and leads him on with the light of heaven to eternal glory.

Ah ! that is true happiness ! He has the joy of the Lord filling his heart, the joy of being forgiven, the joy of having God as his Father and Friend, the joy of having heaven as his home, when all his wanderings are ended. Then this lamp and light of the Lord's word comforts him in the saddest times. It holds up his head among the billows. When dark clouds lower over him, it gives him light in his dwelling, as the Israelites had when

there was darkness over all the land of Egypt. It shows him that all shall be well, so that he goes on his way rejoicing. With that light as his guide, he sings as he goes, "Come joy, come sorrow, I know that my Lord is leading me, and I shall find his blessed rest." And as he goes on, the Lord himself draws near, as He did to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and then his heart burns within him, when He talks with him by the way, and opens to him the Scriptures. Thus Paul and Silas, in the inner prison at Philippi, with their feet in the stocks, were filled with such joy that they sang praises unto God. Thus James Renwick, the martyr, when he lay in prison waiting for execution, said to his mother that he could not pray, he could only *praise*. His joy was so great that his heaven had already begun upon earth.

Let us learn the great lesson that we need a light for our guidance, safety, and comfort. All otherwise with us is infinitely sad, and our way must surely lead us to the abode of darkness and woe.

The Lord has given us a light to guide our feet into the way of peace. It is altogether sure, and may be followed with implicit confidence.

Let us make use of this light. Let us search the Scriptures, for they testify of Jesus, the life and the light of men. Come into this light. Let it into your soul. "The entrance of God's word giveth light. It maketh wise the simple."

The sun may be shining upon our house, but if all the shutters are closed, all is dark within. This is a picture of many. They shut out the light. "This," says Jesus, "is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "The god of this world," says Paul, "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Determine to walk in darkness no longer. Hear the gracious calls of the word of God, and as a poor lost one simply trust to Jesus. He has said for your assurance, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."

## XII.

DAME ISABEL KER'S THREE PRECEPTS.



ECCLESIASTES xii. 13.

“Fear God.”

PROVERBS xiv. 16.

“A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil.”

1 TIMOTHY vi. 12.

“Lay hold on eternal life.”

[IN the olden time our ancestors were fond of  
graving inscriptions on the lintels of their  
doors. There they are still, moss-grown and fretted  
with age, telling what were the life-thoughts of the  
builders of these houses and towers. Many of them  
are very curious and quaint. In Branhholme Tower,  
the scene of the “Lay of the Last Minstrel,” we find  
a curious one: “In warld is nocht nature hes wrought  
yat can lest ay. Therefore serve God keip weil ye  
rod thy fame can nocht deokay. Schir Walter Scot  
of Branhholme knyght. Margaret Douglas, 1571.”  
On Bonshaw Tower, in Annandale, which belonged

to a noted persecutor in the times of the Covenanters, there is this inscription in Latin : " To God alone be all honour and glory." How strange, after returning from a Border raid, or after shooting a Covenanter, to come home and read these words over his door !

But there is one in Bowden, Roxburghshire, to which I wish specially to call your attention : " Fear God. Flee from sin. Make for the Life everlasting to the end. Dame Isabel Ker, 1530." Light was breaking then upon the darkness of Romanism. John Knox was about fifteen years of age. It is interesting to mark these landmarks in the course of one then in the way to glory. We find the like in the book of Proverbs. They were her great life-thoughts summed up in a word or two. And how truly great and truly noteworthy these words are, which Dame Isabel Ker had graven upon the lintel of her door, 342 years ago, that as she went out and in, she might keep in mind the way of life eternal !

#### I.—FEAR GOD.

Joshua's last counsel to Israel was, " Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and truth." Samuel's counsel, when he taught them the



"good and right way," was, "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him with all your heart." It was also the result which Solomon came to after he had tried the round of the world's pleasures and pursuits: "This is the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments." He found all besides full of vanity and vexation of spirit. Hence, he told his son that the fear of the Lord is the "beginning of wisdom," it "prolongeth days," it is a "strong confidence," it is a "fountain of life;" and that "by it cometh true riches and honour."

This fear is not the dread and terror of a *slave*, but is the proper feeling of reverence towards our Maker and Heavenly Father. He who fears God, owns and obeys Him. He trusts in his grace, and loves to do Him honour. It was the fear of God which led Joseph, when he was tempted, to say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" It is the reverse of the proud, wayward, self-sufficient, self-seeking spirit of worldly men, who act as if they were self-existent; and who refuse to be controlled by God, and make their hearts stout, and despise his grace, and harden themselves against his fear.

Some count this to be manly. Manly ! It is the essence of folly. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker. Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth. Think of a worm of the dust raising itself against Him who is Lord of all ! No, it is true wisdom to take our *own* place, and to give God his, and to come to Him humbly, seeking mercy and grace at his hands. "I know," said Solomon, "that it shall be well with them that fear God, who fear before Him : but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow ; because he feareth not before God."

## II.—FLEE FROM SIN.

We flee from that which we dread. Lot fled from Sodom when the Lord was about to destroy it. David fled from Saul when he sought to slay him with the javelin. We flee from a serpent, and from an adversary who is stronger than we.

We do well to "flee from sin." It is the source of all evil, our greatest enemy. It was sin that brought misery and death upon man. It drove him from God, and entailed the curse of his holy law. From sin came all tears, and distress, and darkness,

and despair. Hell itself is the fruit of sin. We should flee from sin, because of its awful consequences. Where there is sin, there is wrath. There is no peace to the wicked. We should flee from it, because it is powerful. "It hath cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by it." We proclaim our folly when we talk of standing up against it. It is an enemy too great to be despised. Many a noble soul has it enslaved and led captive to hell. We must *flee* from it. To enter the lists, and to look at its tempting offers, to hear its fair speeches, or in any way to dally with it, is to become its victims. We must be fully alive to our danger, and seek help from God. He only can set us free, and keep us free.

Men talk of the evils of poverty, and they are hard indeed to endure; but here is something greatly more to be avoided—sin. A man who is wedded to sin, is wedded to sure misery and eternal death. You may be poor in this world's goods; but if you are saved from sin by Jesus Christ, you are rich indeed. You are a child of God, and an heir of glory. You may be rich in this world; but if you are not saved from sin, you are a very slave, mastered by

evil, which will drag you down to endless ruin, and despair, and death.

### III.—MAKE FOR THE LIFE EVERLASTING TO THE END.

A very quaint but important advice. We talk of a ship making for a port in time of storm. We make for a covert from the tempest. The man-slayer made for the city of refuge, that he might escape from the avenger of blood. We must make for "life everlasting." We must strive to enter the strait gate. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." We are exposed to eternal death on account of sin; but God has brought life and immortality to light. He has opened a fountain in his dear Son, who died for our sins upon the cross. He proclaims this life as his free gift.

Now, we should "make for the life everlasting." Why should we perish when there is life for us in Jesus? Why should we die of thirst when a fountain is opened before our eyes? Why should we perish from want when there is bread in our Father's house? Why should we founder in the tempestuous

roadstead, when here there is a quiet haven? But we must make for this life. There are many hellward currents—many a power of darkness to hinder, and great weakness in ourselves. Delay is perilous. We should *make for Christ* at once, in whom there is life. In Christ we shall be safe, and have life too, for it is hid with Christ in God.

And we should “make for it to the end.” It is not enough to *begin* well, we must *end* well. We must make for the blessed haven of rest, the city of refuge, which God has provided. We must hold on amid all duties, temptations, trials, and hindrances. This one thing we should determine to do. “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” Yes, let us remember old Dame Ker’s words, and make for Christ in life and death; and when we pass away from earth, we shall find Him and life everlasting.



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